FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE AND IMPACT PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IN OKLAHOMA HISTORIC DISTRICTS

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Abstract:

In Oklahoma, a young state where the built environment is not as old as in many regions of the country, there is not the long tradition of respecting historic resources often seen in areas with properties dating from the beginning of our country. This, coupled with the demands of contemporary life, makes it all too easy to destroy or compromise the integrity of historic buildings still in existence to provide services for current societal needs. However, there continue to be those who seek out historic properties for both personal and professional reasons. The purpose of this study is to gather information from property owners in nationally registered historic districts across the state about the experience of owning this type of property so that appropriate resources can be developed and supported to facilitate the survival of the state's historic resources. The exploratory nature of this study lends itself to a phenomenological approach to data collection combined with an interpretivist approach to data analysis to investigate the meaning behind the experience of owning property in Oklahoma historic districts.

A sample of 13 historic districts was selected; this sample included residential and commercial districts in both rural and urban areas. For the first phase of data collection, a short demographic survey was mailed to each property owner in the selected districts; the survey provided the opportunity for respondents to participate in a second phase of data collection—focus groups held within each district. The researcher conducted 18 focus groups with 51 participants; data analysis included line-by-line coding of each transcript, with individual comments applied within 30 identified themes.

Seven key findings resulted from analysis and interpretation, and were further organized according to the study's research questions: (a) potential return on investment, (b) place attachment to community and state, (c) appreciation of architectural features, (d) appreciation of historic character, (e) participation in community's history, (f) impact of maintenance and repair, and (g) difficulties with the preservation system. Recommendations address the resulting implications for educators, the interior design and architecture professions, preservation partners, and for community governance.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Oklahoma, first known as "Indian Territory," became a state in 1907, but the story of many of its historic buildings began while it was still a territory with this intriguing name. While the state has come far in the intervening time, it still honors its past in many locations; some of these are the neighborhoods and city blocks now known as "historic districts." Every state in the country contains historic resources. These properties may be archeological sites, bridges, sculptures, buildings, or barns. They may be a single resource, such as an individual home, or several resources grouped together, such as a university campus. This study discusses the factors that have an impact on property ownership within a historic district, which is a "significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development," as defined by the National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 5). For the purpose of this study, all use of the term "historic district" will refer to an area listed on the National Register. Historic districts allow the people of Oklahoma to experience the foundations of the state's growth at key periods in time. However, historic districts are not time capsules, opened once for a glimpse into the past; they are simply one more step in a continual progression into the future. They are a gift that the people of today nurture, improve, and offer to the people of tomorrow.

Background

The story of today's historical resources begins with the history of our country. From an early date, Americans were concerned with preserving those places significant to the birth of our nation so that future generations could understand and appreciate our history. Often these first efforts in historic preservation were driven by a sense of patriotism and involved homes that played an important role in the lives of our early presidents, such as George Washington. Later, people began to appreciate buildings for their architectural beauty, and this served as the rationale for preservation. However, some of the most significant accomplishments in historic preservation came from the desire to create an entire environment so that residents and visitors could experience a community as it had been in its early days.

As more became interested in preserving our historic resources, they wanted to create a national movement that combined private and public efforts, and in 1949 developed the National Trust for Historic Places. This organization brought together all facets of preservation, and eventually led to passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. This act established the State Historic Preservation Office and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, as well as the National Register of Historic Places that serves as the official list of historically significant resources in America (National Park Service, 1987).

The National Register describes different types of resources and identifies criteria used to determine their historical significance. These criteria categorize historic resources in four classifications: those linked with a significant event; those linked with a significant person; those that are examples of a significant design or work by an established master of design or construction; and those that may provide information about history or prehistory (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 2). Resources may be identified as historically significant at the local, state, or national level, and may meet more than one of the established criteria. The National Register also separates resources into five categories according to the type of resource. These categories identify a resource as a building, structure, object, site, or district. This study will investigate historic districts in Oklahoma; although a historic district consists primarily of buildings, it may also contain structures or objects within its boundaries.

Statement of the Problem

In Oklahoma, where the built environment is not as old as many other regions of the country, there is not a long tradition of respecting historic resources often seen in areas with properties dating from the beginning of our country. This, coupled with the demands of contemporary life, makes it all too easy to destroy or compromise the integrity of historic buildings still in existence to provide services for current societal needs. However, there continue to be those who seek out historic properties for both personal and professional reasons. What motivates the people of Oklahoma to own property in historic districts that represent a concentration of these historic resources?

There is a limited body of literature discussing these reasons as they apply to property in historic districts, but there is information relating to the influences, both psychosocial and financial, that impact the decision to live in or own a historically significant home or building. Some of these influences include a sense of nostalgia for a simpler way of life and attachment to places that are meaningful and contribute to a vibrant community. The sense of history infused in historic districts and the historic character so evident in the architectural features of these homes and buildings are also prime motivations for those who wish to own these types of properties. Many people are drawn to places that are unique, both visually and emotionally; this can sometimes influence their sense of identity and social status. However, there is often simply a sense of stewardship – honoring the right of these historic resources to exist because they have remained standing over time; as a result, owners often feel a sense of responsibility to maintain these buildings or homes for future generations. Financial motivations for owning historic resources are shown to be influenced by the typically higher property values associated with these areas and the tax incentives offered to those who complete rehabilitations on revenue-producing properties in accordance with Secretary of the Interior standards. Heritage tourism can also be a powerful inducement for communities to invest in the preservation of their existing building stock for the benefit of current residents and economic development of the area.

If there is a limited amount of literature discussing why people choose to own property in historic districts in general, there is no evidence of why the people of Oklahoma choose to do so. The state is overwhelmingly rural, and the abundance of open land available on the outskirts of most communities encourages many to purchase newly constructed homes. Yet there continue to be those who seek out properties within the boundaries of a historic district, regardless of the size of the surrounding community. Without knowledge of what might motivate this group of people, the preservation community cannot provide appropriate education or other resources to support the efforts of existing owners or encourage new owners to make a commitment to preserve the state's historic resources.

Theoretical Perspective

An investigation into the factors that might influence and impact a decision to purchase property in a historic district is an investigation into the meaning behind the experiences of the owners and their connection to the community in which their property is located. As such, this exploratory objective typifies an interpretive theoretical approach that seeks to understand the perspectives of the participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 17). A phenomenological approach falls under this description as the basis for the theoretical perspective utilized for the data collection process of the study. By speaking with participants who are experiencing the particular phenomenon, the researcher can attempt to understand the experience for the participants based on their perspective of the situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 141). An interpretivist approach was utilized for the data analysis process of this study; this approach utilizes personal interactions with participants—documented through narrative—to develop understanding and inform interpretations of the meanings created within a specific experience (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

According to Becker (1992), phenomenological investigation is based on two assumptions. The first of these is that a person's experience is a valuable basis for knowledge and develops from whatever that person encounters. The second assumption is that the daily life experienced by everyone is an important source of knowledge (p. 11). These assumptions derive from research by Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Husserl was instrumental in the growth of phenomenology through his work studying human consciousness and his development of a "method of inquiry and empirical exploration that deepened existential understandings of life" (p. 10). He felt that examination of everyday experiences helped researchers learn about people's lives. Heidegger carried on the work of Husserl by expanding phenomenological exploration to include existentialism, thereby broadening the opportunities to investigate human experiences (p. 10). He asserted that "existing in the world is an essential part of being human…to understand people we must understand their contexts – the worlds or situations in which they live" (p. 13). Merleau-Ponty expanded phenomenology in several areas; one of these was in the relationship between people and their environment. He believed that meaning is created between a person and the world in which they live; each of these elements has constraints that result in the development of meaning that is "co-created between the person and the object" (p. 19).

The work of these three philosophers in the development of the theoretical perspective of phenomenology provides a basis for collecting data in such a way as to facilitate the development of understanding of the everyday experience of property owners in Oklahoma historic districts and the meaning this experience creates for them. This perspective informed the creation of the list of questions asked of participants in the focus groups held within each historic district by striving to encourage responses that helped illuminate their reasons for owning this type of property and the larger meaning behind this.

The interpretivist approach seeks the development of meaning from participants as they interact with others and within the specific context/environment being studied; the approach requires the research to be an integral part of the process of data collection and analysis in order to "learn the local language, meaning, and rules" (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Using this approach to data analysis, the researcher seeks to become "immersed in the participants' world" (p. 269) which will facilitate understanding of the experience as perceived by the participants and promote interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon. This process of data analysis was accomplished through the line-by-line coding of focus group transcripts and development of themes from referenced literature as well as from the transcripts themselves. These themes were then interpreted and reported through the use of thick description of the participants' narrative.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to gather information from property owners in historic districts across the state of Oklahoma about the experience of owning this type of property. Knowing why people choose to become part of the history of a community by deciding to own property in a historic district is vital to insuring that these resources remain viable. It is important for the preservation community to understand the influences behind these decisions and the resulting impacts on ownership so that it can provide appropriate education and support to current property owners and encourage others to enter into the chronicles of history by becoming stewards of our common foundation. This information will be acquired through the following research questions that are intended to provide such information as:

Why do people own property in a historic district in Oklahoma?

How do these reasons differ if the property is a home or business?

What factors have an impact on ownership of this type of property?

Significance of the Study

Information acquired from focus group participants will provide insight into some of the reasons for purchasing and the resulting impact of owning property within a historic district in Oklahoma. By identifying and understanding these reasons, more appropriate preservation resources can be developed and supported, and those resources can be directed to the areas that will be more likely to encourage others to value the historic resources within a community and ensure their survival into the future. As a result of more appropriate support for property owners, this may lead to an increase in the satisfaction owners have with their community, and encourage them to strive to maintain the historic integrity of the property and by extension, the district. This information will be helpful to those in the preservation community such as city/state preservation officers, as well as those interested in supplying products or services to these property owners. Currently there is no significant body of knowledge that discusses the breadth of factors that motivate people to purchase and subsequently might have an impact on owning property in an Oklahoma historic district; studying the range of these factors as they are experienced by property owners will help determine which occur most prevalently within a district and which are present across the sampled districts.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Research

One of the primary assumptions made by the researcher was that property owners responding to the survey or participating in a focus group did indeed have knowledge of this experience to share with the researcher. Because they own property in the selected districts, it was assumed that they knew certain facts about the property and the larger district or community; the researcher learned this was not true in all cases. For example, the first question on the survey asked about the age of the property—on many surveys this was left blank or marked “unknown” or the equivalent.

A limitation of this research is in the scope of the study; this was a relatively small sample from the larger population of historic districts existing in the state. For the most part, saturation of information was reached prior to the conclusion of the 18 focus groups included in this study, so it is unlikely that exploring all of the districts would have been productive. However, there was always some small bit of new information to be learned, so it is possible that there are important insights still waiting to be discovered in the remaining historic districts.

Definition of Terms

Although many of the following terms are common in contemporary language, there are occasionally contexts that apply particularly to the field of historic preservation. For the purposes of this study, the following definitions will be used:

Adaptive use—“the process of converting a building to a use other than that for which it was designed” (Murtagh, 2006, p. 99).

Beauty—“a combination of qualities, such as shape, color, or form that pleases the aesthetic senses, especially the sight” (Costello, 1997).

Historic character—“distinctiveness of a place may come from much more than its appearance. It may draw on other senses and experiences, such as sounds, smells, local environmental conditions or historic associations, for example those connected with particular crafts or famous people” (Pendlebury, 1997, p. 4).

Historic preservation—“encompasses a broad range of activities related to preservation and conservation of the built environment by physical and intellectual methods” (Bucher, 1996, p. 235).

Historic resource—“any district, site, building, structure, or object determined to be historically significant” (Bucher, 1996, p. 236).

Place Attachment—“bond between an individual or group and a place that can vary in terms of spatial level, degree of specificity, and social or physical features of the place” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

Sense of history—“knowledge that helps us gain a sense of *where* we are…gain a sense of *when* we are, filling in gaps in our personal recollection and family stories that allow us to understand our place in a succession of past and future generations…gain a sense of *with whom we belong*, connecting our personal experiences and memories with those of a larger community, region, and nation” (Glassberg, 2001, p. 7).

Sustainability—“conditions under which humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations” (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, n.d.)

Rehabilitation—“the act or process of returning a property to a state of utility through repair or alteration that makes possible an efficient contemporary use, while preserving those portions or features of the property that are significant to its historical, architectural, and cultural values” (Murtagh, 2006, p. 95).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In light of the research questions, this review will first provide a background of the historic preservation movement, highlighting the influential events that led to the form of preservation seen today. A description of the process for nominating historically significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places provides a basis to understand the criteria for evaluating historic districts that are the focus of this study.

The History of Historic Districts

Origins of historic preservation in America.

Compared to many countries from which our ancestors originated, the United States is still a young country. Yet, almost from the very beginning, Americans realized the importance of maintaining the tangible evidence of our history as represented by the built environment. The development of preservation practices through the ages has followed a natural progression from efforts involving individual properties, to large scale undertakings targeted toward maintaining resources for the masses, to revitalization of community resources. The reasons for preserving properties have ranged from patriotism in the earliest examples to economic development in more recent times. Whatever the reason, the ultimate result is that an important property from our past is saved and is now available for successive generations to learn from and enjoy.

Most of the earliest examples of preservation were connected with the birth of the United States. These include saving the Old State House in Philadelphia (now known as Independence Hall) from demolition in 1816, (Tyler, Ligibel, & Tyler, 2009, p. 27) as well as creating the first house museum (Hasbrouck House, in Newburgh, New York) when the state legislature of New York purchased and saved the home that served as one of the headquarters of George Washington during the final years of the American Revolution (Murtagh, 2006, p. 12). These marked some of the earliest occasions when concerned citizens recognized the importance of individual properties and made organized efforts to save them for future generations to learn from.

The next leap forward for preservation practices came in the mid-19th century when a "small, frail spinster" from South Carolina named Ann Pamela Cunningham organized a grass-roots campaign to save Mount Vernon, George Washington's home in Virginia. She organized a women's group called the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association that raised funds throughout the South, and ultimately the nation, to purchase the property and operate it as a museum (Tyler et al., 2009, pp. 29-30). Not only was this the first time preservation occurred as the result of national efforts, it set a precedent for the localized nature of preservation as well the leadership role of women; the Washington estate is still owned and managed by the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

By the end of the 19th century, a renewed enthusiasm for artifacts of the country's origins resulting from the centennial in 1876 became an appreciation of historic buildings for their architectural interest. In 1878 a Boston architect named Arthur Little published the first book of drawings of colonial era homes (Hosmer Jr., 1965, p. 197). As young men, renowned architects Charles McKim, William Mead, and Stanford White, along with William Bigelow began a walking tour of New England in 1877 that resulted in a collection of sketches of colonial-era architecture and design details. In the years to follow, many similar books served as a rationale for the preservation of historic buildings by recording the aesthetic accomplishments of life in the past and established architectural merit as a valid measure of worth for preservation purposes (Murtagh, 2006, p. 19).

The beginning of the 20th century saw new legislation titled the "Antiquities Act." Although originally intended to prevent the removal or destruction of artifacts on federally owned land, this act, established in 1906, was the nation's first historic preservation legislation and gave the president the authority to designate properties as historic. The Antiquities Act also placed historic preservation under the jurisdiction of the United States Secretary of the Interior, which continues to monitor preservation today (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 32).

Just as Ann Pamela Cunningham advanced the field of preservation in the mid-19th century, a wealthy Bostonian named William Sumner Appleton advanced the field once again at the beginning of the 20th century. Appleton developed the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA), now known as Historic New England (Murtagh, 2006, p. 17). The goal of this organization was to preserve the historic homes of New England through use of the funds of the organization as provided by members. In doing this, he set a precedent for the house museum to serve as the face of preservation (Murtagh, 2006, p. 66). However, Appleton was not saving historic homes solely for museum pieces; many of his successes were the result of convincing business owners, organizations, and private citizens of the benefits of acquiring these properties to restore for use as offices or other practical uses in what might be considered the equivalent of today's "adaptive use" (Hosmer Jr., 1965, p. 249).

In the midst of Appleton's career, the government established the National Park Service, which would come to oversee the majority of federal programs related to historic preservation. Begun in 1916 to administer the operations of large historic sites as well as the national parks, the National Park Service eventually became the home of the National Register of Historic Places, when it was established. It works with a variety of stake holders in preservation, including state and local governments, and oversees the rehabilitation tax credit program; it also developed the standards and guidelines that establish the acceptable criteria for rehabilitations on historic properties (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 33).

Not long after the establishment of the National Park Service, a wide-reaching collaboration was about to change the field of preservation forever. Dr. William Arthur Rutherfoord Goodwin had the dream of reconstructing and restoring the entire town of Williamsburg, Virginia to its colonial glory, following his time spent restoring the Bruton Parish Church as its rector. This was the first time anyone sought to preserve an entire community, addressing not only the built environment but a way of life (Murtagh, 2006, p. 20). In 1926 Dr. Goodwin accomplished this by appealing to John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who eventually agreed to fund the project. Over the next two decades, the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg led to interdisciplinary innovations in historical and archaeological research, architectural restoration, interpretive activities for the public as well as academia, education, radio and motion picture publicity, and tourism (Hosmer Jr., 1981, pp. 11-73).

During this same period of time, Henry Ford was developing a community vision of his own. Ford wanted to use historic buildings as a method for teaching the public about history, specifically about history related to industry and technology. Like Colonial Williamsburg, Ford’s Greenfield Village, located in Dearborn, Michigan, was a collection of buildings that housed artifacts of a by-gone era. However, where Williamsburg restored and preserved historic buildings in their original site, Ford purchased buildings, moved them from their historical context, and gathered them together in a simulation of a New England village (Murtagh, 2006, p. 81). Opened to the public in 1933, it was popular with visitors but not viewed favorably by the preservationists of the time. Ultimately, however, along with Colonial Williamsburg, it served to focus attention on the importance and value of maintaining our history.

While Colonial Williamsburg and Greenfield Village greatly advanced the practice of preservation, the field also benefited, ironically, from the privations of the Great Depression in the 1930’s. In an effort to employ thousands of out-of-work architects, artisans, and engineers, President Roosevelt’s New Deal established programs such as the Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to provide these groups with employment in their own disciplines. In this way, architects documented historic properties through photographs and detailed drawings while employed by the Historic American Building Survey (HABS). Established in 1933, HABS was the first federal program to document historic properties. The Historic Sites

Act (1935) was also developed during this time with the intent of preserving historic buildings for the “inspiration and benefit” of the public (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 40).

The early advances in both public and private sectors joined together in 1949 with the advent of the National Trust for Historic Places. Established by congressional charter but not a federal program, the National Trust would serve as a means of bringing together all facets of preservation and connecting the National Park Service with the activities of the private sector. Today, the activities of the National Trust range from focusing attention on historically significant properties in danger of demolition through its Endangered Properties List to ensuring that historic buildings are compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (Tyler et al., 2009, pp. 42-44).

Following the creation of the National Trust, the next event to have an impact on the practice of preservation was the Urban Renewal Act of 1954. In an attempt to stimulate the economy after the Great Depression of the 1930s and then World War II in the 1940s, the government passed this act to offer federal funds to those who purchased and cleared urban areas. Although the government actually intended to encourage new construction in downtown areas, most new construction moved into newly formed suburban areas and resulted in the demolition of many historic buildings in central business districts. While the Urban Renewal Act was not initially a positive step forward for preservation, it ultimately served to anger preservationists and became the catalyst for public recognition of the importance of historic properties and their contribution to communities (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 44).

As a result of the public's increased awareness of issues critical to preservation, the National Trust collaborated with the U.S. Conference of Mayors in 1966 to publish a seminal book titled *With Heritage So Rich*. This book provided documentation of the wealth of historic resources already destroyed and the importance of maintaining those that remained, and called for increased support of historic preservation causes by the government. It also made several recommendations on how to increase that support, including the need for collaboration between all levels of government on issues related to preservation and the development of a funding program that encouraged the preservation of properties rather than demolition. Ultimately, *With Heritage So Rich* led to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, called the "most important historic preservation legislation ever passed by Congress" (Tyler et al., 2009).

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) accomplished several goals that revolutionized the field of historic preservation. It established the National Register of Historic Places, which is the official listing of historic resources in the nation, as well as authorizing legislation to provide funding for preservation. It also required that each state and territory establish a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to serve as a point of contact between national and local levels (Murtagh, 2006, p. 157). The NHPA also developed an Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, appointed by the president; this agency advises the president on matters of preservation and is the only government agency that exclusively addresses issues related to historic preservation (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 50). As part of this mandate, the Advisory Council reviews those disputes that fall under Section 106 of the NHPA; this section calls for review of federally funded projects that may impact a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places or eligible to be listed. In this way, property owners have some recourse if a federal project has the potential to compromise a historic resource (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 53).

After only ten years of progress following the NHPA, two further acts revolutionized the field of historic preservation again. In 1976, the country passed the Tax Reform Act, which was the first legislation that provided a financial motivation for preservation (Murtagh, 2006, p. 58). By removing the incentive for developers to demolish existing properties in favor of new construction, the act provided a tax benefit for rehabilitating income-producing historic property (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 53).

Soon after the establishment of the Tax Reform Act, the 1978 Revenue Act augmented the benefits for rehabilitation. This act offered tax credits to those who rehabilitated historic, income-producing buildings; this program allowed developers to take a 10% tax credit on their rehabilitation expenses. However, this credit applied only if the work performed met the standards for a “certified” rehabilitation, meaning that the work followed the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. The success of this program resulted in significant numbers of rehabilitations on historic properties and played a part in the revival of many deteriorating central business districts (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 250).

To encourage rehabilitation on properties even though they may not have been deemed historically significant by the Secretary of the Interior, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 provided new tax incentives for developers. This act offered a sliding scale of tax credits based on the level of historical significance and age of the property. For certified historic properties, developers were able to receive a tax credit of 25%, but uncertified properties were now considered eligible for a tax credit, though at a lower level—20% of the properties was forty years old or older and 15% if the property was thirty years old or older. This allowed developers to benefit from rehabilitating *old* properties, even though they may not have been deemed *historic.* This act also allowed the developer to take a tax reduction equal to what had been invested in the project, along with accommodation for losses incurred as a result of the rehabilitation (Murtaugh, 2006, pp. 58-59).

Unfortunately, the Tax Reform Act, subsequent legislation in 1986, reduced the benefits of rehabilitation given in the Economic Recovery Tax Act. This legislation reduced the amount of tax credits available for properties certified as historic from 25% to 20%, and only allowed tax credits of 10% on commercial buildings constructed prior to 1936. In addition, developers were only able to receive tax credits equal to their tax liability on rental income and limited partnerships, but only for those with annual less than $250,000 (Murtaugh, 2006, pp. 59-60).

Prior to World War II, the downtown central business district was the focus of a community, housing local businesses as well as municipal activities. People regularly spent time “downtown” for commercial and social purposes. With the prosperity that followed the war, the community began to move away from this area to live in suburbs now accessible by affordable automobiles on a new network of interstates, and with them moved the commerce that served the community. As businesses left central business districts, people had even less reason to go there, creating ghost towns from previously thriving communities (National Trust for Historic Preservation, n.d.-c). Attempting to revitalize these critical community resources, the National Trust for Historic Preservation established the Main Street Program to assist communities in enhancing existing assets and encourage the participation of residents to develop new businesses in central business districts. This program utilizes a "Four-Point Approach" that addresses the "organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring" of a community while promoting the preservation of historic resources. Through 2012, this program has resulted in over $55 billion reinvested into central business districts around the nation (National Trust for Historic Preservation, n.d.-a). National level support provides "Main Street" communities with access to multiple sources of technical, educational, and financial assistance. As of 2013, there were 37 Main Street Programs active in Oklahoma (National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2013). The annual investment of Oklahoma Main Street programs in communities was over $367 million in 2013 ; this investment resulted in 2,157 jobs. Since its beginning in Oklahoma in 1986, the cumulative impact of the Main Street program has totaled $1.3 billion, with 16,541 jobs created in the state (Oklahoma Department of Commerce, 2013).

Categories of historic properties.

Some background information about how properties are determined to be historic will provide a basis for understanding the experiences that occur within historic districts. The following information will explain the procedure for categorizing historic properties and determining if they are eligible for listing on the National Register. The process applies to every type of historic resource and serves as a consistent, standardized technique for assessing historic significance.

The first step in nominating a property for listing on the National Register of Historic Places is to decide exactly what type of property it is. The National Register outlines five categories—*buildings*, *structures*, *objects*, *sites*, and *districts*. *Buildings* are "created principally to shelter any form of human activity," and must be primarily intact (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 4). Examples of buildings are homes, hotels, churches, courthouses, schools, or theaters. *Structures*, the second category, are considered "functional constructions made usually for purposes other than creating human shelter," (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 4) and includes such things as aircraft, bridges, fences, highways, and silos. The third category—*objects*—describes "constructions that are primarily artistic in nature or are relatively small in scale and simply constructed" (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 5). Objects consist of such things as fountains, sculpture, or boundary markers, and are designed to be associated with a specific place. *Sites* are the fourth category of property considered by the National Register, and may be those items that provide information about historic or prehistoric places or activities. These could include battlefields, landscapes, rock carvings, or trails and may be "standing, ruined, or vanished" (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 5).

The final category considered by the National Register is that of *districts*, which will be the focus of this study. Districts consist of a "significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development" where the over-arching significance is created by a sense of unity of the elements contained within its boundaries (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 5). This unity could be the result of functional or aesthetic characteristics, and the district may include individual components that are historically significant on their own. It may also include components that are not historically significant at all; these are considered "noncontributing resources." One of the primary characteristics of any historic district is that it is defined by a distinct boundary where there is a clear separation between those items that make up the district and those items that are not included. The district may also be constructed of two areas that are considered historically significant but are separated by an area that is not considered historically significant; an example of this might be archeological areas where the artifacts or locations are scattered but related to each other in some way. Common examples of historic districts are central business districts, college campuses, or residential areas. (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 6).

Criteria for historic significance.

After determining the appropriate category, a property nominated for listing on the National Register must be put into a proper context in order to determine its historic significance. What period in time does the property represent, and is that period historically significant? How does the property characterize that period in history? Does it contain enough elements to communicate that it belongs to that period? Typically, the historic context can be found in one of four criteria identified by the National Register. These are:

- Criterion A—association with an important historic event
- Criterion B—association with an important historic person
- Criterion C—association with a historically significant architectural style or construction technique

- Criterion D—properties that might provide information about history or prehistory (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 7).

Historic properties may be considered significant in one or more of these categories, and may be significant at the local, state, or national level. It is generally accepted that historical significance must have occurred at least 50 years prior to the date at which the property is seeking listing on the National Register so that there can be a reasonable amount of time in which to gain perspective on the significance of the event or person's life. However, in recent years there has been a movement to consider properties that are less than 50 years old if they are believed to have "exceptional importance" (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 41).

A historic property must not only fit into one of the criteria described above; it must also have "integrity," or be able to communicate its significance. This is evaluated from a list of seven characteristics that are considered to accurately describe the concept of historical integrity. These characteristics are location; design; setting; materials; workmanship; feeling; and association. For a property to be considered to have historical integrity, it should embody most, if not all, of these characteristics (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 44). To evaluate a property's integrity, it is important to establish that the critical features that define the historical significance are there and are visible. The critical aspects of integrity must also be decided upon, as not all seven may be appropriate for every property; it may also be necessary to decide if the property needs to be compared with other similar properties to help determine the level of integrity. With regard to historic districts, not every component is required to have historic integrity, but the majority of the district's elements must have. Examples of those elements that do not have historic integrity and therefore do not contribute to the overall significance of the district are those properties that are compromised due to extensive renovations that do not reflect the specific historic characteristic of the district, or those that may originate from a time period different than the prevailing period of the district (National Park Service, n.d.-a, p. 46).

The issue of integrity becomes particularly important for a property when rehabilitations occur. Ideally, rehabilitation of an older property is sensitive to its historical significance, but this is not always the case. According to the National Register of Historic Places, only those rehabilitations that conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are considered "certified" rehabilitations and qualify the work to be eligible for external funding opportunities. The Standards for Rehabilitation are intended to allow a historic property to be updated for contemporary purposes without sacrificing those features that contribute to its historical significance. The Standards address acceptable alterations to the interior and exterior of the property, including the landscape and any adjacent new construction on the site (National Park Service, n.d.-e)

Definition of "historic district."

As described previously, a historic district, which this study targets, is defined by the National Register of Historic Places as a concentration of related properties or other resources that are united by some feature —this could be the historic period of construction or the aesthetic quality of the properties within the defined boundary, and could be formed solely from residential properties or may include commercial properties as well. As of the end of 2013, there were approximately 13,121 historic districts listed on the National Register (National Park Service, n.d.-d). Although the term “historic district” has been designated by the National Register, these districts may have developed prior to the establishment of the National Register.

The first historic district was developed in 1931 by the city of Charleston, South Carolina when the city council designated a section of the city as an “old and historic district” through zoning restrictions. The residents of Charleston were disillusioned with proposed new buildings (in this case a gas station) and insensitive rehabilitations of homes that compromised the historic character of the city. They wanted to recreate and maintain those features that helped define the character of the city and its neighborhoods, and enacted a zoning ordinance that allowed them to do that by requiring review of changes to the exterior of any buildings that might be seen from a public street (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 38).This was the first time that the practice of preservation was utilized as a method of city planning (Murtagh, 2006, p. 87). Charleston became the template for other communities, and was soon followed by the formation of the Vieux Carré historic district of New Orleans in 1936 and many others between 1936 and 1950, including San Antonio, Williamsburg, and Georgetown (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 39).

Historic districts can typically be divided into the broad categories of residential and commercial areas. However, a district may also be something less typical such as a college campus or a large ranch, and not fall completely into either of those groups. As this study investigates the historic districts of Oklahoma, the majority of these can be described by the characteristics of either residential or commercial areas, so only those will be explained further.

Residential historic districts have a concentration of residences, but may also include a small portion of businesses, such as a small medical office. There may also be buildings or areas meant for the public to gather, such as parks, libraries, schools, or churches. While we tend to think of a "residence" as a single unit, in fact it might be composed of a multi-unit home such as duplex or a single family home with a separate garage or carriage house, and a small shed on the property. Depending on the age of the property, there may also be a building originally used as a stable for the horses necessary to pull the carriage that was commonly used when the home was built.

Similarly, commercial historic districts, such as central business districts, may consist primarily of businesses—retail spaces, offices, or restaurants—but may also contain a few small residential spaces such as apartments located over a business. Central business districts include those entities important to a community's ability to survive economically, as well as culturally. Because these areas typically have larger thoroughfares to accommodate large quantities of traffic, they also support large spaces for the public to gather. These might include a downtown park, concert venue, or place of worship. Central business districts are also likely to contain the municipal buildings that serve a community, such as the court house and other buildings important to the operation of the jurisdiction. Because this area is the center of the community, it may also contain buildings that facilitate transportation such as a railroad or bus station. Because of the variety of functions necessary for a successful commercial historic district, it differs significantly with a residential district in diversity of the purposes of the resources included.

Along with separation into residential or commercial categories as described above, the districts in Oklahoma can also be divided into two other categories of *rural* and *urban*. For this study, *rural* is defined by Allen (1984) as “in or suggesting the country” (p. 655), and *urban* is defined as “situated in a town or city” (p. 832). The majority of Oklahoma is rural in nature, with only two large urban areas—Tulsa and Oklahoma City. These two cities are considered urban due to a significant difference in population compared to other cities in the study—Oklahoma City’s population is 580,000 and Tulsa’s population is 392,000; the next largest city containing historic districts in Oklahoma is Norman, with a population of approximately 111,000 (U.S. Department of Commerce, n.d.). As a result, all cities in this study other than Oklahoma City and Tulsa are categorized as rural. (For the purpose of this study, historic districts are categorized as residential or commercial if they contain an overwhelming majority of the specific type of property. For those districts that contain a somewhat equal proportion of each type, they are categorized as “mixed.”)

Although residential and commercial historic districts may differ in the variety of functions contained within their boundaries, they both may contain other recognized historic property types. As mentioned previously, these are buildings, structures, objects, and sites, and where these resources are located singly they may convey some degree of their historic significance; but it is their location within a historic district that allows them to communicate fully their importance in the appropriate historical context. However, not all resources located in a historic district are significant. This type of resource is termed “noncontributing” and defined by the National Register as a property that does not “add to the historic architectural qualities, historic associations, or archeological values for which the property is significant." These might include a home built in a different time from the significant period for the neighborhood or a building altered to the extent that it no longer has historic integrity (National Park Service, 1997, p. 16).

Importance of historic districts.

In essence, the important contribution of a historic district is in the concentration of resources that allows a resident or visitor to immerse themselves in history and understand the role of the area in the continuum of the community. While there are many reasons for establishing a historic district, residents discuss both advantages and disadvantages of the designation. When a historic district is listed on the National Register, the advantages appear to outweigh the disadvantages. One advantage is the recognition that it is historically significant to the community, and as such allows residents some recourse under Section 106 of the NHPA if a federally funded project threatens the area. Inclusion on the National Register also makes certain funding opportunities available through the Historic Preservation Fund as established by the NHPA (National Park Service, n.d.-c). Other benefits include higher, sustained property values over time; distinctive, aesthetically pleasing surroundings; opportunities for economic development through heritage tourism; increased recruitment of businesses as a result of a higher quality of life; and the ability to participate in the decisions that affect the community. Perhaps the most important advantage, however, is assurance that local resources are protected so that the characteristics unique to the area can be carried into the future (National Trust for Historic Preservation, n.d.-b). While any of these may be the impetus behind establishing a historic district, contemporary reasons may also include a desire to encourage and manage the direction of new development or the rehabilitation of existing resources as a means to promote the community to others (Tyler et al. 2009, p. 156).

However, not everyone is in favor of establishing a historic district in a community. Some objections come from residents or property owners within the district, but there may also be opposition from offices within local government in the community. The latter source of resistance may be due to fears of loss of jurisdictional power and increased costs of operation, or perhaps perceived difficulty in implementing future projects. For residents, the common objections often revolve around the rights of property owners. Owners believe they have a right to do whatever they wish with their own property, although there are almost always restrictions in any location as a result of zoning or building code requirements. Residents are also concerned about the steps required for approval of any proposed change to their property, and increased costs to them resulting from expensive materials necessary to maintain a historical appearance or higher property taxes (Tyler et al., 2009, pp. 179-183). Some of these concerns are certainly valid, but given the chance to voice their concerns and educated about the benefits of life in a historic district, residents may come to embrace the distinct advantage of the designation.

Historic districts in Oklahoma.

In the National Register of Historic Places dated April 2, 2012 (the document used as the basis for this study), Oklahoma contained 95 historic districts (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2012). They were located in 38 of 77 counties, ranging from border to border, from urban to rural areas, and include residential as well as commercial districts.

These districts incorporate thousands of individual resources, both contributing and noncontributing. They are historically significant in a variety of categories and combinations of categories, with the majority of listings (55) claiming significance due to both an association with a historical event (Criterion A) and a significant architectural style (Criterion C). The districts in Oklahoma include three that are documented as part of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS) program and six that are listed as National Historic Landmarks, with two of those belonging to the HABS program. National Historic Landmarks are defined by the Secretary of the Interior as "historic places that possess exceptional value in commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States" (National Park Service, n.d.-b). In Oklahoma, these are Fort Sill in Comanche County, the 101 Ranch near Marland in Kay County, the Guthrie National Historic Landmark District in Logan County, Platt National Park Historic District in Murray County, Fort Gibson in Muskogee County, and Boley Historic District in Okfuskee County (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2012). Oklahoma's historic districts represent a wealth of resources important to the past, as well as the future, of the state and its residents.

Existing Literature Addressing Ownership of Historic Properties

There is an abundance of literature discussing why people seek out historic properties, and the importance they place on them. There are studies investigating the type of architectural features people prefer, the economic ramifications of listing on the National Register, and the consequences of gentrification. Research strategies apply both qualitative and quantitative techniques to a wide range of topics. In essence, the field of historic preservation can be viewed from a variety of perspectives. This study seeks information about the factors that influence people to purchase property in a historic district. After reviewing the available literature, the information was divided into two broad categories – psychosocial influences and financial influences. These are discussed individually below, and divided into sub-sections that address specific components that contribute to each of the two classifications.

Psychosocial influences.

Nostalgia.

Nostalgia is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as "a sentimental yearning for the past" (Allen, 1984, p. 500), and represents an intrinsic stimulus to seek out historic references. This can take many forms, from desiring a tangible link with the past to patriotic enthusiasm. Barthel (1996) states that people enjoy historic properties as a way to "get in touch with history" and forge a connection between the past and the present (p. 345). In a study reported by Nyaupane & Timothy (2010), Americans surveyed nationally about their sense of connection to the past reported a mean rating of 7.3 on a 10 point scale, indicating that they felt very connected to their heritage (p. 227). After studying the perceptions of heritage in community residents in Arizona gathered through a state-wide telephone survey, Nyaupane and Timothy concluded that awareness of and appreciation for heritage resulted in an appreciation for historic preservation of the built environment (p. 236). Day (1992) states more explicitly that "old facades inspire people to think about the history of a place and about its future" (p. 327); this embodies the desire of people to find the meaningful connection between past and present that historic preservation represents. The desire for this connection, or "sentimental yearning for the past," contributes to the sense of place that many feel in historic areas. Historic places have meaning for people, and often this meaning is the result of some connection to their personal perceptions of history (Day, 1992).

For some, a sense of nostalgia represents a desire to return to a simpler time when life was less complicated and stressful. People view historic properties and neighborhoods as representative of that time and may even romanticize the past in a way that skews their perceptions of historic events. Nasser (2003) reports information that implies that people do this because of a lack of confidence in the future (p. 468); in contrast, Deckha (2004) believes this sense of nostalgia is the result of dissatisfaction with the demands of contemporary life (p. 404). In a similar vein, Barthel (1996) states that living with a sense of nostalgia about the past and its remnants (in this case, historic properties) provides a “time-out from contemporary society”(p. 355), as well as making it easier to relate to history through development of more pleasant “myths” about actual events (Barthel, 1989b, p. 100). She continues by commenting that “preservation became part of this mythmaking process, as Americans began to construct ritualized presentations of their preindustrial past” (p. 101). The author provides an example of this in the Main Street program, explaining that the program “draws on the importance of the ‘small town’ as a symbol of all that is good, strong, and true in American life” (p. 96).

Sense of history.

Similar to the nostalgic desire for a simpler time is the ever-present sense of history inherent within historic districts. Some of this sense of history can be attributed simply to the observable architectural differences between historic and non-historic buildings. In an article investigating the cost and benefits of historic properties, Reynolds (2006) identified that owners of historic properties would rather own property in an area with other similar properties so that there are "shared values among owners…and the psychological, physical, and economic security" is maintained. Immersing themselves in life within a historic district allows property owners to reach a deeper level of connection with the built environment, as well as the district and larger community. Milligan (2007) expands this view further in her study of homeowners of historic properties in New Orleans (prior to Hurricane Katrina) and their perspective of equating historic properties with the history of residents. In interviews, homeowners felt that "the very physical existence of the historic built environment is a tie to the past" and as such, believed that preserving the historic properties as the "most tangible tie to their culture" (p. 120) was a way to honor past residents. As property owners in historic areas honor the past, they are able to find their own place in the history of their community and to develop a deeper understanding of the traditions observed over time and to actively participate in the perpetuation of those practices.

Historic character.

As stated in the previous section, a sense of history may be perceived as relating directly to the historic built environment, and this in turn becomes evidence of the somewhat nebulous concept of "historic character." As identified in a master's thesis by Charles (1986), historic character is often *documented* through those quantifiable elements of the building such as its style, building materials, skill of craftsmanship, and exterior and interior architectural features, but *assessment* of those elements to determine if they are appropriate or aesthetically pleasing is still subjective (p. 2). He goes on to relate historic character to the National Register's definition of "integrity," and describes historic character as providing "evidence of…social and cultural contribution[s]" through the built environment. His methodology involved categorizing "character-defining" architectural features through the use of a chart that allowed a property reviewer to identify the level of integrity as well as determine if the feature was character-defining and rank its importance accordingly. This is, admittedly, a very architectural basis for determination of historic character, and only acknowledges the social or cultural aspects of the past as they are evidenced through resulting architectural styles. However, to the casual observer or property owner who may be uneducated about a community's history, architectural features are easily visible and understandable, and as such, are a valid means for the perceived presence of historic character. Another master's thesis by Kartikawening (2003) cites an earlier study that assesses the historic character of an area by looking at architectural style and construction, integrity, historic significance, and setting. While this study also concentrates on those physical attributes readily visible, it does consider the more subjective aspect of historic significance by taking into account associations with the community's cultural or social past (p. 25). Within the context of historic preservation, the term "historic character" typically refers to architectural features and the physical elements of the built environment; this was also the case in much of the literature. However, the perceived presence of historic character does not always need to be evidenced by buildings alone, and the building's place in the history of the community should be considered.

***Place attachment*.**

There is a wealth of literature on place attachment, however, very little refers to historic locations in general, or historic districts in particular. Place attachment is created in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Often personal experiences influence place attachment as a result of both positive and negative experiences (Saar & Palang, 2009, p. 7). Daily activities in the community, interactions with neighbors over time, and the maintenance of the physical environment all contribute toward the development of an attachment to a specific place (Brown, Perkins, & Brown, 2003). Utilizing hierarchical linear modeling analyses to investigate the level of attachment a person feels for their home compared with their block or neighborhood, Brown et al. found that residents reported higher levels of attachment to their home, even though the surrounding neighborhood may be deteriorating (p. 268). Based on these results, the study proposed the consideration of place attachment by policy makers as a motivation for community revitalization.

In comparison, residents in three Italian cities reported a higher sense of belonging only when they viewed their neighborhoods more positively; a lower sense of attachment resulted when their perceptions of the area were negative (Mannarini, Tartaglia, Fedi, & Greganti, 2006, p. 211). As this study concerned areas in a different country, differences in levels of place attachment may be the result of cultural aspects. Also, the three cities serving as study sites were located across the length of Italy, rather than in one geographical region and included neighborhoods that were representative of the entire city; while it is likely that at least some of the neighborhoods were historic, it may be overstating the issue to completely associate these attitudes of place attachment with historic districts.

Literature discussing the role of place attachment to a community may apply in this study if one considers a historic district as a "community," even though it may be located within the boundaries of a larger municipality such as a town or city. Trentelman (2009) states that a feeling of attachment to one's community depends on those connections residents form with each other and the ways in which they interact with each other (p. 202). She goes on to say that the long-term connections that people form with each other are better "predictors" of the level of community attachment felt than the size of the community itself. This implies that although historic districts may be quite small, the perceived "boundary" of the district encourages a more intimate relationship between residents that promotes a greater sense of attachment to the "community". This was confirmed by a study in France that investigated the connection between the level of satisfaction felt by residents and their identification with the neighborhood (Fleury-Bahi, Félonneau, & Marchand, 2008, p. 678). In a survey given to participants in three cities, the authors found that the residents' sense of identifying with their neighborhood was directly dependent on the amount of time they had been a part of the community.

Sense of identity.

In *The Dimensions of Place Meanings* (Saar & Palang, 2009, p. 7), the authors state that a person creates an identity in relation to the places they value. In this way, the desirability of a neighborhood can contribute to the creation of a person's sense of identity. Sense of identity could also include the desire for, or maintenance of, status. The “cachet” of having a property considered to be historically significant may add to the appeal of the property as well as the status of the owner (Coulson & Leichenko, 2004, p. 1598). In an article about gentrification, Zukin (1987) states that “culturally validated neighborhoods automatically provide new middle classes with the collective identity and social credentials for which they strive” (p. 143). In this sense, the properties selected for preservation reflect the identity of those encouraging the preservation. Sometimes these areas began as manifestations of a particular social class, but often they have become new symbols of the current social structure and contribute to their identity and status (Barthel, 1989b, p. 102). Zahirovic-Herbert & Chatterjee (2011) link this desire for higher status with conspicuous consumption in the real estate market, specifically in particular sub-divisions. They concluded that certain area names have a “snob appeal” and reflect the theory of conspicuous consumption when residents perceive a feeling of “prestige associated with living in a particular neighborhood” (p. 6). This may certainly apply in those locations where the names of historic districts are well-known and perceived to be areas where the more affluent members of the community own property; by extension, owning property in these areas leads others to assume that the owners are of a higher status socio-economic level or social class than others.

There is also a connection between status and the aesthetic component of historic properties. Zukin (1987) compares the appreciation of the aesthetic features of historic neighborhoods and contemporary support of preservation and historic properties with “the patrician sponsorship of art and architecture in US cities in the late nineteenth century” (p. 143). While most people enjoy being in aesthetically pleasing surroundings, the higher status and wealth of particular social classes provides the flexibility to seek out or create these surroundings with fewer constraints than might be experienced by lower classes.

However, there are some assumptions evident with regard to those who reside in historic areas. In a study examining tourism in historic districts, Harrill and Potts (2003) observed that many assume residents of historic districts to be wealthy and enjoy higher levels of political clout (p. 242). Although this is undoubtedly true for some, it cannot be true for everyone, as the entire district is subject to any restrictions or lack of financial support established by public policy.

Desire for uniqueness.

There have been several studies investigating the aesthetic preferences of people with regard to older buildings or neighborhoods. Naser (1994) describes a study designed to determine the factors that contribute to aesthetic responses of people to their environment. Results indicated that these factors include preferences for open space to enclosed space, a level of order in the environment, moderate levels of complexity, familiarity, and compatibility to adjacent buildings. Another study investigated a preference for “fake historic architecture” based on “the public’s aesthetic preferences for historic-looking architecture and the belief that tourists prefer historic architecture” (Levi, 2005, p. 149). This is due, in part, to the tendency of historic buildings to have more exterior ornamentation and “visual complexity,” and in part to the emotional connection many people have with the past (p. 150). The findings reported a positive correlation between aesthetically pleasing characteristics and historic character. This preference for historic architecture resulting from its “visual richness” and distinctiveness was also mentioned by Herzog & Gale (1996) and Herzog & Shier (2000) in studies investigating why and when people prefer older buildings to more contemporary architecture.

However, there may be unfavorable outcomes arising from a desire for unique spaces. In an article by Zukin (2008), she posits that people moving into older neighborhoods “consume an idea of authenticity” as they perceive the area to meet their idea of the genuineness of the spaces (p. 728). She goes further to state that if this “consumption” depends on the uniqueness of the area, it can also serve as way of excluding others as the residents adopt the area for their own. Their subsequent activities within the area can serve to encourage those who have similar attitudes or discourage those who are “different.”

***Stewardship*.**

Some feel they serve as stewards for historic resources; in essence that they are there to insure that the historic home or other type of resource survives into the future. In some cases they believe “a fine building preserved is also an emblem of our attachment to values more pleasant and joyful than money” and by preserving historic resources they are, in essence, “performing a public service” (Barthel, 1989a; Paulsen, 2007). Deckha (2004) explains that preservation is a “practice through which time is expressed as space” and people show concern for their spaces because they represent the “social memories that have formed them” (p. 404). The destruction of a historic building deprives future generations of the ability to see and experience it for themselves (Barthel, 1996; Milligan, 2007). Others believe that preserving historic resources by honoring the knowledge and labor involved in creating these resources is one way they can show their respect for those who have lived in the past, as well as those coming in the future.

Although a sense of stewardship is often a motivation for preserving historic resources, there is also ample evidence that people believe that these resources have a right to exist, even if not particularly historically significant, simply due to their age. Many preservationists feel because a building is still standing, that fact alone makes it important and worthy of preserving, regardless of any architectural or historical merit (Milligan 2007; Barthel, 1989a). In a study by Levi (2005), 52% of respondents agreed that historic resources "should be preserved regardless of how beautiful they are" (p. 155).

Sustainability.

A concept related to stewardship, but more far-reaching, is that of environmental awareness and the desire for a sustainable environment. The sustainable design movement is becoming an integral component of preservation of the built environment. As commonly attributed to the well-known preservationist Carl Elefante, "the greenest building is often one that is already built" (Tyler et al., 2009, p. 300). As people utilize historic buildings for contemporary purposes, they generate less demolition waste and reduce the amount of new materials needed for construction (Young, 2008). As many historic properties are often located in or near urban business centers, those who live and work in these areas enjoy being able to walk to work and other locations, which reduce carbon emissions produced by commuting. This also encourages them to contribute to the local economy by supporting the downtown businesses they pass on their way to work (Zukin, 1987).

Financial influences.

Investment opportunity.

There are various financial reasons that motivate buyers of historic properties, but a common thread is the potential for the property to have a positive impact on the owner's finances; few would purchase a property (historic or otherwise) with the intention of losing money in the process. Often properties within a historic district are purchased as potential rental property for both residential and commercial tenants, and frequently those properties require some degree of rehabilitation before being ready for tenancy. In a study of commercial buildings in Winnipeg, Canada, Cyrenne, Fenton, and Warbanski (2006) found that for every dollar spent in rehabilitation, the assessed value of the property increased by approximately $0.33. Along with other factors (such as the method of calculating income based on a market approach), this low return on investment appeared to be impacted by the need to upgrade mechanical systems and fire suppression systems for current building code compliance (p. 13), a common occurrence in historic properties. Rehabilitation can be costly and difficult, depending on the amount and type of work required. Restrictions derived from local zoning or architectural review may limit the options of property owners with regard to the quality or availability of necessary materials and thereby have a negative impact on the owner's profitability (Asabere, Hachey, & Grubaugh, 1989).

Zoning laws or review processes in place within historic districts are viewed by many as a hindrance to rehabilitation efforts, yet, this very fact provides a level of security to property owners that inconsistent alterations or infill will be restricted (Mabry, 2007, p. 1). In a white paper for the City of Tucson, Mabry states that the consistency often present in historic districts may reduce the practice of "flipping" (purchasing a low-priced property, doing a limited amount of rehabilitation to make it habitable, and then selling quickly at a high profit margin). Historic districts may also tend to have higher numbers of owner-occupied properties, and those owners—along with renters—tend to stay in homes longer, producing a more stable neighborhood. This also leads to greater participation by residents in planning activities as well as review of proposed alterations, which in turn provides greater protection from decline of the area over time (p. 5), further protecting an owner's investment.

Property value.

There is ample evidence that historic designation of a property tends to produce an increase in property value, for both the property itself and surrounding neighborhoods, even if the other property is not historically significant (Coulson & Leichenko, 2004; Zukin, 1987). In a study conducted in Ft. Worth, Coulson and Leichenko (2004) found that areas with historic properties had significantly higher increases in property values, although there was not a corresponding increase in occupancy or decrease in vacancy rates (p. 1598). Researchers looking at property in historic districts in Oklahoma City found that between the years 2000 and 2003, property values increased over 8.5% in nine of eleven historic districts—more than the value of properties in other areas, even after accounting for socio-economic and location differences (Brus, 2009).

An increase in property value may be a result of the low initial cost for properties that are in need of rehabilitation (Zukin, 1987, p. 137). In many cases, this low initial cost provides an impetus for prospective property owners to purchase with the aim to rehabilitate the property. Many believe this leads to gentrification that displaces existing residents when property values rise beyond their socio-economic level. However, Coulson and Leichenko (2004) found that gentrification did not result from listing the property as historically significant nor from the corresponding rise in property values; in fact, they found that the demographic composition of the area did not change significantly over the next ten years (p. 1598).

Leichenko, Coulson, & Listokin (2001) mention that the historic listing that produces higher property values also tends to serve as a form of insurance by implying that continued maintenance of the neighborhood will help the area retain its high quality, assuring future owners of their wisdom in investing in historic property (p. 1974). In a study involving several cities in Texas, Leichenko et al. found that property values increased between 5 % and 20 % as a result of their historic status (p. 1981). In another study by Coulson and Leichenko (2001), the increase in property value was a function of the level of historic designation. Property values increased more as a result of a nationally significant historic designation; conversely, those properties designated as locally significant did not receive a corresponding increase in value (p. 114). An increase in property value in the Boston metropolitan area was also observed in a study by Heintzelman & Altieri (2013); they compared mean selling prices of homes in historic districts with homes outside a district and found that the selling price of homes located within a historic district was almost 60% higher than other properties (p. 560). However, they also stated that zoning restrictions in place as a result of historic designation often serve to reduce prices due to the limited rehabilitation options that are available to property owners that may prevent them from maximizing the investment potential of the property (p. 547).

While the literature discussed above provides several examples that property values increase as a result of historic designation, there is also evidence that designation leads to a limited supply of available properties that results in a rise in value. Gordon and Vaughn (2012) state that the positive effects of “increases in tax benefits, neighborhood effects, sense of community, and land use ordinances” cause the area to be more desirable to owners resulting in a decreased supply of available properties, which would in turn lead to an increase in property values (p. 278). Perhaps redundantly, another factor in the increased demand for historic properties (and the resulting decreased supply) is the historic character evident in the architecture of these buildings compared to more recently constructed resources. The intricate detail, quality of materials, and building techniques used in their construction would be prohibitively expensive to produce today and may not even be available (Winson-Geideman, Jourdan, & Gao, 2011). In a study of properties located in a National Historic Landmark District in Savannah, Winson-Geidman et al. found that buyers are willing to purchase properties at a higher selling price simply because they are old—in this case, 119 years old—and the features such as those listed above that correspond with an advanced age are desirable to them (p. 339). In most areas there is a limited supply of buildings of an advanced age available, which would necessarily limit the potential building stock from the beginning.

***Tax incentives*.**

Another common factor that encourages historic property ownership is the availability of economic incentives. For owners of revenue producing properties that undergo rehabilitation (Young, 2008), income tax credits are available at the state and national levels to promote historic preservation and revitalization of older areas (p. 31). This can be a major motivation for those who need the reductions available to be able to develop specific properties. Although there are a considerable number of requirements, and the stipulation that all work must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, many are willing to accept the restrictions as the price of developing the property. In Oklahoma, property owners and developers have access to a variety of funding options in addition to these income tax credits; the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) maintains an extensive list of financing options that include those appropriate for certified rehabilitations (Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency, n.d.). Many of these options are open only to those seeking to rehabilitate income-producing properties or larger public agencies or communities, but the list also includes options such as Section 203(k) loans offered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development through the Federal Housing Administration (p.37) for property owners who intend to occupy the home they are rehabilitating. Owner-occupied properties are unable to qualify for income-tax credits because they are not revenue-producing, but they may benefit from fewer restrictions in their rehabilitations and still see higher property values within the district, which could still be an economic incentive for ownership (Asabere & Huffman, 1994).

Although the typically higher property values of properties within historic districts may also result in higher property taxes, these may be mitigated by the availability of tax reduction programs in some areas. Mabry (2007) reports that Arizona allows properties that are contributing resources within a historic district to qualify for a "State Historic Property Tax Reclassification" that lowers property taxes of properties listed on the National Register by up to 50% over a period of 15 years. This program is intended to provide economic benefits to middle-income property owners while encouraging preservation rather than demolition (p. 4).

Community revitalization.

Many view historic preservation as the vehicle that will help bring life back into communities that have historic resources but are not utilizing them for the benefit of the residents. The goal of increasing the presence of white-collar employees in downtown areas is often the motivation for promoting new commerce. As people spend time in downtown areas, they desire a full range of amenities (including housing) in close proximity to their place of business. Correspondingly, as more people work in these areas, they are likely to patronize restaurants and consume services that provide a livelihood for others (Zukin, 1987, p.144), thereby supporting further economic development. While some may believe that community revitalization efforts are typically targeted toward commercial areas, there is literature supporting the idea that preservation may also be the vehicle for invigorating residential areas. Zahirovic-Herbert and Chatterjee (2012) found that community leaders may seek historic designation for an area as a way to encourage higher home values; however, this may result in displacement of those at lower socio-economic levels unless efforts are made to create new or retain existing low-income housing in the area (pp. 380-381).

***Heritage tourism*.**

Heritage tourism is often one technique utilized to promote community revitalization that will inject much needed revenue into a city or town as well as preserve commerce in a central business district (Levi, 2005). Although promotion of heritage tourism is a way many cities encourage historic preservation as a component of economic development, the demands of tourism can have a negative effect on historic areas. There are those that point out that tourism tends to place a disproportionate emphasis on the architectural features of historic areas at the expense of educating visitors about local cultural historic resources (Nasser, 2003). Tourism also requires an increase in amenities such as lodging and food services to support high volumes of visitors; ironically, financial support of these amenities may divert capital investment from preservation of the resources that have drawn the tourists to the area, and may ultimately lead to a “style or time bias” (p. 472) that may stereotype a community identity.

However, the perception of the value of heritage tourism is dependent on the residents’ role. For those who reside in the historic areas that serve as the focus for heritage tourism, they may perceive fewer benefits because they are already at a higher socio-economic level and do not need the revenue from tourism to raise their standard of living. Conversely, those residents of a community who depend on tourism for their livelihood perceive the activity to be of great benefit to their financial wellbeing (Harrill & Potts, 2003, p. 240).

The success of heritage tourism greatly depends on the area in which the historic resources are located. In a study by Maskey, Brown, & Lin (2009), they found that heritage tourism is more likely to be successful if there are several sites in a community for visitors to tour. They also commented that implementing a community revitalization program based on historic resources may not be successful if potential tourists do not perceive the area to be a desirable location to visit (p. 348).

Summary

In conclusion, while the discipline of historic preservation has made great strides from its early beginnings, there are still challenges in furthering the field, particularly in Oklahoma. Because the built environment is not as old as in many other regions of the country, a long tradition of respecting historic resources often seen in areas with properties dating from the beginning of our country does not exist in the state. This, coupled with the demands of contemporary life, makes it all too easy to destroy existing historic resources in order to provide services for current societal needs. However, there continue to be people who seek out historic properties, for both personal and professional reasons. This study will investigate this experience by examining the factors that influence and impact property ownership within historic districts in Oklahoma and will seek information such as:

Why do people own property in a historic district in Oklahoma?

How do these reasons differ if the property is a home or business?

What factors have an impact on ownership of this type of property?

Information derived from this study will provide valuable information to the preservation community so that it might direct resources where needed most and help preserve our historic resources for future generations to use and enjoy.

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CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study is to gather information from property owners in historic districts across the state of Oklahoma about the experience of owning this type of property. Knowing why people choose to own property in historic districts is vital to insuring that these resources remain viable. It is also important for the preservation community to understand the influences behind these decisions and the resulting impacts on ownership so that it can provide appropriate education and support to current property owners and encourage others to purchase historic property. This information will be acquired by finding answers to the following research questions:

Why do people own property in a historic district in Oklahoma?

How do these reasons differ if the property is a home or business?

What factors have an impact on ownership of this type of property?

From the 95 historic districts listed in *Oklahoma's National Register Handbook* published April 1, 2012, 13 were randomly selected for gathering information from property owners (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2012).These districts included commercial and residential properties and were located in both rural and urban areas. Data collection consisted of a two-step process; surveys requesting demographic information were sent to property owners in each district, with the opportunity for the owner to return the survey with their contact information if they chose to participate further in a small focus group conducted within the district. The researcher conducted 18 focus groups, speaking with a total of 51 participants in 10 of the 13 selected districts, in groups ranging from one to six members.

Although the use of focus groups is a common qualitative research strategy, there was no evidence of its use to study historic preservation or related issues in the literature. Focus groups gather data from a group of people at the same time. There are several advantages to using focus groups in the study of issues related to historic preservation, and to those factors that influence and impact property ownership in historic districts, specifically. Although the topic of property of ownership in historic districts has been studied in some aspects, as seen in the previous chapter, it has not been explored from the perspective of the factors that encouraged people to purchase this type of property or the impacts experienced by owners following their purchase. Focus groups are an effective method for learning what aspects of a topic may be important, and allow a researcher to gather information from a variety of viewpoints at the same time, encouraging interactions between group members that may lead to richer data in a broader frame of reference (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 164). Because the focus groups will be recruited from one type of population within each region (for example, all the residential historic districts in a region), they will be homogeneous; this will promote a sense of comfort among participants as they may already know each other and will feel more at ease discussing this topic in a group (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 179).

There is some literature that questions the appropriateness of focus groups within a phenomenological approach to data collection. In an article discussing the use of focus groups within a phenomenological theoretical perspective, Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook, and Irvine (2009) explain that the possibility of a person's perception of a situation being influenced through interaction with another's preconceptions or prejudices conflicts with the theories developed by Husserl that strive to "describe the essential structures of phenomena in a manner that is free of interpretation" (p. 3). However, they go on to state that "Heideggerian phenomenology is not concerned with attempting to collect 'uncontaminated' participant accounts" (p. 4), and the use of focus groups and the resulting discussion allow "the phenomenon being researched [to come] alive within the group" (p. 5).

Site Selection

According to the *Oklahoma National Register Handbook* (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2012) published April 1, 2012, there were 95 historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places; however, 18 of these are only districts as defined by the National Register (a concentration of resources) and include parks, ranches, universities, or military bases that do not have individual or private owners. For this reason, these districts were not included in the study. This left a total of 77 historic districts, 42 of which are primarily commercial, 34 of which are primarily residential, and one that is a mixture of both types.

The Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Office has divided the state into seven "management regions" as part of their preservation planning process; this served as the basis for dividing the districts for sampling purposes (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2010) (see Figure 1). Six of the seven regions contain counties with historic districts, though to varying degrees; see Figures 2 and 3 for the number and distribution of counties and districts within each region. (Appendix A contains a list of the historic districts located within each region.) After division into the six regions that contain historic districts, the Oklahoma districts were separated further into three categories to describe the primary composition of the types of properties–residential, commercial, and mixed.

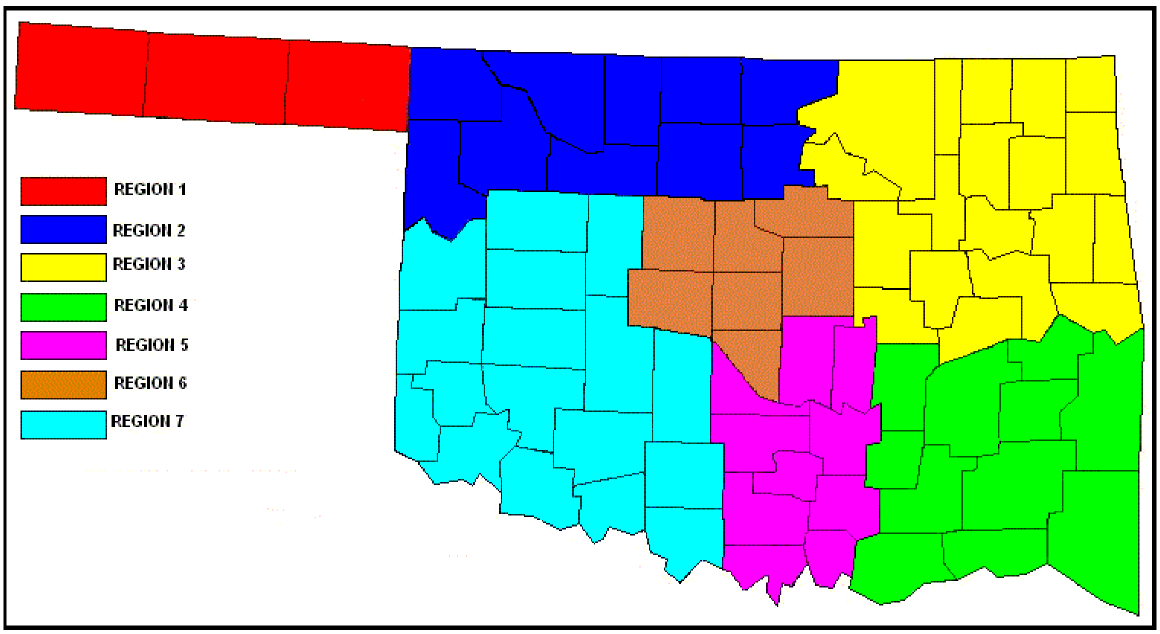

Figure 1. Division of Oklahoma into SHPO management regions. (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2013). Retrieved from http://www.okhistory.org/shpo/histcons.htm.

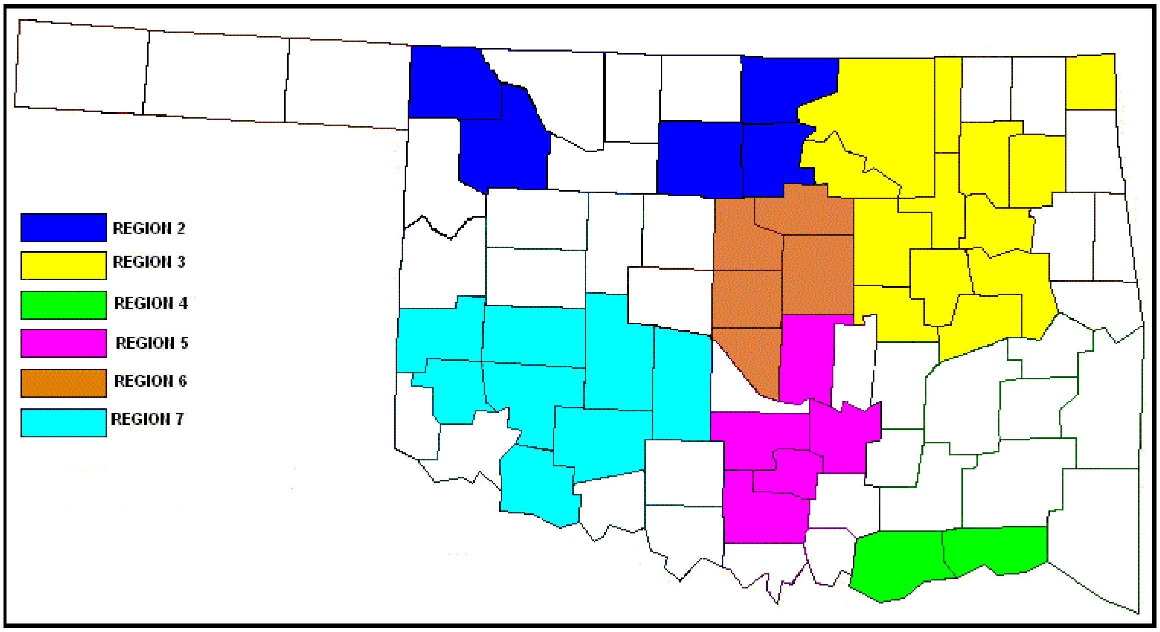

Figure 2. Distribution of counties containing historic districts within Oklahoma SHPO management regions.

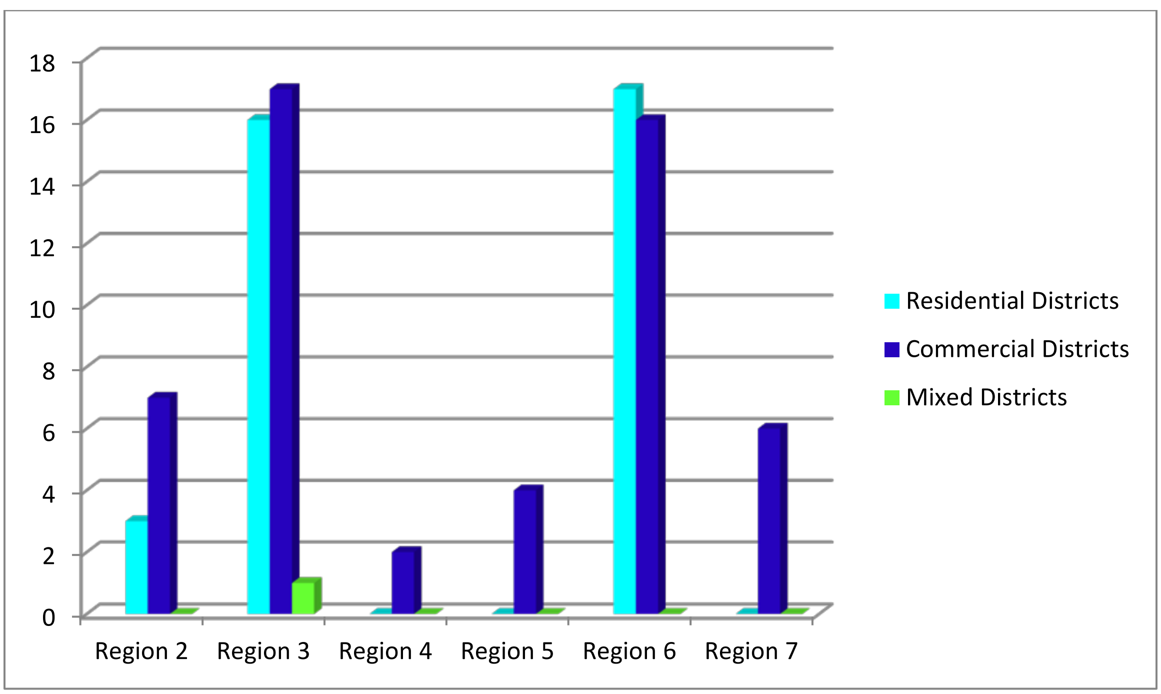

Figure 3. Number and type of historic districts within Oklahoma SHPO management regions.

The primary method of data collection was through the formation of focus groups of property owners within the historic districts. However, the study did not involve establishing a focus group within each historic district in the state; it is likely the researcher would have reached saturation of information long before conducting all 80 focus groups. Therefore, the researcher took a simple random sample from the districts located in each of the six regions discussed above. The researcher randomly selected one residential and one commercial district from each region, and these were considered representative of the entire region. If a mixed district was selected, it counted as whichever category has not been selected yet for that region.

In Regions 4, 5 and 7 the counties contained only commercial districts, highlighting an imbalance between the two main types of districts; there was also an inequity among urban and rural districts, as the number of rural districts in Oklahoma overwhelmingly exceeds the number of urban districts. However, this disparity accurately reflects the difference between the number of counties in Oklahoma considered rural (68) and the number of counties considered urban (4), with five counties considered to be a mix of urban and rural areas (OSU Center for Health Sciences, 2011). Because Regions 3 and 6 contained urban as well as rural areas, a district was selected from each category—i.e., one residential district from both rural and urban areas, and one commercial district from both rural and urban areas.

Using this method, a total of 13 historic districts were randomly selected from the six regions; see Table 1 for districts and brief descriptions and Figure 4 for locations.

Table 1

Description of Selected Historic Districts.

District name city – region – type	District description
Waverley Historic District Enid – Region 2 – Residential	Residential area representative of suburban land use from 1900 to 1935 with most homes constructed between 1911 and 1920
Newkirk Central Business District Newkirk – Region 2 – Commercial	Agricultural commercial area built between 1894 and 1920 with majority of buildings constructed in Plains Commercial style
Kendall Place Historic District Muskogee – Region 3 – Residential	Residential area developed primarily between 1896 and 1905 with the majority of homes constructed between 1900 and 1930
Miami Downtown Historic District Miami – Region 3 – Commercial	Commercial area with majority of buildings constructed between 1902 and 1958 with a mix of styles including Art Deco
Carlton Place Historic District Tulsa – Region 3 – Residential	Residential area with primarily Prairie School and Bungalow/Craftsman style homes built between 1910 and 1915
Brady Historic District Tulsa – Region 3 – Commercial	Commercial, industrial, and mixed-use buildings developed between 1906 and 1945 after the discovery of oil in the area in 1901
Hugo Historic District Hugo – Region 4 – Commercial	Central business district constructed primarily between 1900 and 1920 and greatly influenced by the railroad industry
Pauls Valley Historic District Pauls Valley – Region 5 – Commercial	Central business district with buildings constructed between 1893 and 1910 that represent adaptation to the Chickasaw culture
Guthrie Historic District Guthrie – Region 6 – Residential	Primarily residential properties that connect to the founding and development of Guthrie between 1889 and 1929
Perkins Downtown Historic District Perkins – Region 6 – Commercial	Central business district with buildings that represent typical construction seen in Oklahoma Territory after 1889 settlement
Paseo Neighborhood Historic District Oklahoma City – Region 6 – Residential	Residential area with a wide variety of styles with most homes constructed between 1910 and 1939
Automobile Alley Historic District Oklahoma City – Region 6 – Commercial	Primarily commercial area built from 1910 through the 1930s that represented the new automobile industry in Oklahoma
Chickasha Downtown Historic District Chickasha – Region 7 – Commercial	Central business district with buildings constructed primarily between 1900 and 1954 with a variety of styles

Note. (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2013).

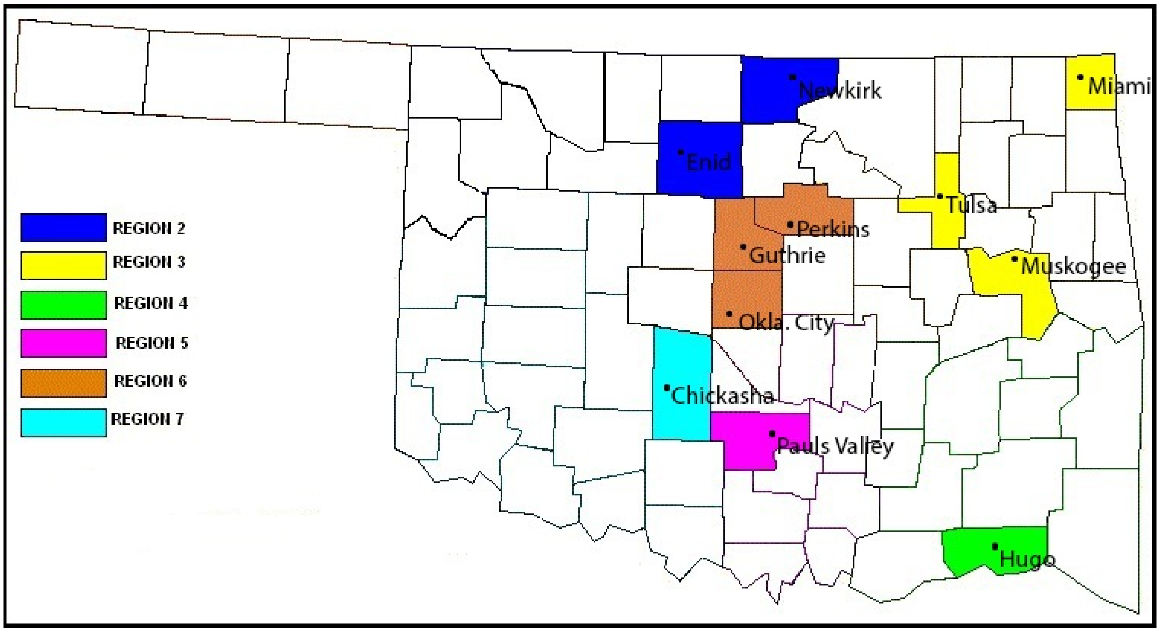

Figure 4. Location of historic districts selected for study.

As mentioned above, the two regions that contain both rural and urban areas were sampled separately; therefore, one residential district and one commercial district were randomly selected from all those located in the urban area, and the process was repeated for the rural areas. As a result, a total of four districts each selected from Region 3 and Region 6. Because three regions contain only commercial districts, there is an imbalance in the total number of commercial districts represented in the study. However, because these commercial districts are located in rural areas with small populations, they contain fewer commercial properties from which to solicit owners to participate in a focus group. Although there are fewer urban areas in the state, the commercial districts located in these areas are likely to contain a larger number of properties; this will help balance the greater concentration of commercial districts selected from rural areas. The division of the 13 districts resulted in nine from rural areas (three residential and six commercial districts) and four from urban areas (two each of residential and commercial districts).

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited through a two-step process. The first step was the distribution of a demographic survey to property owners in the selected districts. At the bottom of the survey, respondents had the option of providing their contact information if interested in participating in the second step of data collection, a focus group discussion held in each district. The process is described in depth below.

Survey respondents.

Participants for the focus groups were initially recruited through a survey distributed to every property owner in the selected historic districts. Because property ownership is public information, the names and addresses of property owners were available from county records in the County Assessor office. For the counties involved, all records were available online; however, for a few counties the online database was accessible only through a short-term subscription for a nominal charge.

Oklahoma's National Register Handbook lists the boundaries of each historic district, and these were coordinated with a map of individual areas to determine which addresses were appropriate to include in the survey. Following the development of this initial list of addresses, site visits were made to each district to confirm addresses. Once the final list of addresses was established, a short survey was mailed to each property owner in the selected district. In some districts there was a single owner for multiple properties; in these cases, only one survey was sent to the property owner. A total of 2,351 surveys were distributed, with a subsequent mailing of 1,976 reminder cards for those who had not responded within approximately three weeks of the initial mailing. Of the original number distributed, 90 were returned by the post office, labeled “unable to forward,” resulting in a total of 2,261 that reached property owners in the 13 districts.

The distribution method of the surveys was designed to encourage a maximum number of property owners to respond. Each addressed envelope for distribution of the surveys was hand-written to convey a personal touch that might induce owners to open the envelope rather than discard it as junk mail. A stamped, addressed envelope was also included for participants to return their surveys. Each address was given a unique identification code that was written unobtrusively on the back of the survey; this code consisted of the number of the region, the designation of rural or urban, the type of district (residential or commercial), and the number of the entry on the address list. This code served to protect the confidentiality of respondents by allowing them to omit their name if they did not wish to participate further, so they might feel more comfortable about providing private information about themselves. For data collection and analysis purposes, the identification code was also used to track the addresses of returned surveys so that a tally could be kept; this count allowed descriptive statistics to be generated to assess return rate, and identified those property owners who had not yet replied and would receive reminder postcards requesting their response.

Focus group participants.

For those who provided contact information on the returned survey, this was recorded in a spreadsheet. Every district contacted had at least one respondent who was interested in participating in a subsequent focus group. Respondents were asked to provide the preferred method of future contact, and this was used as a first attempt to reach individual respondents; for many, this was an email address, but most also provided a phone number. If the preferred method of contact was not successful, then an alternative method was attempted. Two attempts were made to contact those respondents who indicated they would be interested in participating further; if neither of the attempts was successful, the name was removed from the list so as not to be bothersome to the respondent. In the case of three of the selected districts—Brady Historic District (Tulsa), Carlton Place Historic District (Tulsa), and Hugo Historic District (Hugo)—no one who had initially indicated an interest in participating further was available for a focus group when contacted; therefore those districts are not represented in the qualitative analysis of focus group transcripts, but they are represented in the quantitative analysis of demographic information derived from survey responses.

Although each focus group was limited to a maximum of six participants, several of the districts had many more than six respondents who were interested in contributing. However, because of a natural rate of attrition due to changes in circumstances, time constraints, health issues, or simply changing their minds, there were often respondents who had initially indicated interest in participating in a focus group but were not able to attend a scheduled session. For this reason, everyone who provided contact information was contacted for potential participation, rather than simply sampling from those who initially volunteered. This led to multiple focus groups within a single district on two occasions—Waverley Historic District (Enid) merited two focus groups and Guthrie Historic District merited eight focus groups due to the large size of the district and overwhelming interest of property owners. Conversely, in three districts—Paseo Neighborhood Historic District, Perkins Downtown Historic District, and Kendall Place

Historic District—only one person was interviewed; in two of the cases there were several people who failed to attend the scheduled discussion resulting in only one participant, and in one case there was only one respondent in the district who was interested in participating further. In Miami Downtown Historic District and Paseo Neighborhood Historic District one property owner from each of the districts was interested in participating in a focus group, but these owners did not actually live in the district; coincidentally, both lived in Tulsa, so a focus group was held in Tulsa where each person discussed property ownership from the perspective of the relevant district. In 12 of the 13 districts, focus group participants consisted of those who provided contact information on the distributed surveys. At the discussion within the Automobile Alley Historic District, one of the focus group members brought other property owners from the district to the discussion even though they had not returned the survey indicating an interest in participating, resulting in inadvertent snowball sampling.

Data Collection

Data was collected through two methods; for the first method, the researcher developed a short survey consisting of 12 questions that collected demographic information. This survey was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the researcher's institutional affiliation, the nature of the research study, reasons for soliciting their participation, and compliance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements for studies involving human subjects (see Appendices B and C). The surveys sent to each type of district were identical with one exception—the question asking respondents to provide information on annual income. For those who owned residential property, this was phrased as "income range for your *household*," and for those who owned commercial property this was phrased as “income range for your *business*.” At the bottom of the survey was a brief description of the second part of the study, and respondents were offered an opportunity to provide their name and contact information if they were interested in participating in a focus group discussion conducted in their area (see Appendices D and E).

The second method of data collection was through focus groups held within each district. In order to develop the most appropriate interview questions for the focus groups, the researcher solicited participation from property owners in a local historic district to meet for a pilot discussion. (This group was not included in the population from which samples were selected.) The pilot group was asked a preliminary set of questions derived from information discussed in the literature review and targeted to provide information pertaining to the research questions. Based on input from the pilot group participants, this initial list of questions for the focus groups was refined and finalized. This process helped determine which issues are critical to this population and merit discussion, and it helped refine the language used in the final set of focus group discussion questions so that they were the most relevant for potential respondents (see Appendix F).

To begin the first method of data collection, surveys were distributed to property owners in the selected districts in January, 2013. After an initial mailing to 2,351 property owners (2,261 reached the owners due to 90 letters returned to sender labeled “unable to forward”), 336 surveys were returned; an additional 81 surveys were received after 1,976 reminder postcards were mailed at the beginning of February 2013. From these survey responses, participants were recruited for the second method of data collection, focus groups held within each district. Between May 22, 2013, and October 5, 2013, the researcher conducted 18 focus groups with a total of 51 participants, covering 10 of the 13 selected districts; the group sizes ranged from one to six members. Focus groups were held within the boundaries of the selected historic district if a suitable venue was available; if no venue was available, then the discussion was held in a community close to the district. Often these focus groups were held in a local library meeting room; on a few occasions the group met at the place of business of one of the members who offered the venue. The discussion typically lasted approximately one hour, but sometimes was longer or shorter depending on the size of the group. Once everyone had arrived, the researcher explained the purpose of the meeting, as well as the participants' rights as research subjects, and distributed informed consent forms that were then signed by all participants and the researcher. The informed consent form reiterated the assurance of the researcher that all personal information would remain confidential and no personal identifiers would be given in any publications resulting from the research findings (see Appendix G). The researcher also urged participants to keep all information discussed during the focus groups confidential among themselves to preserve others' anonymity. After securing permission from the participants, the researcher recorded all discussions with a digital recorder so that transcripts of the conversations (edited for content) could be distributed back to them to check for accuracy of the discussion and to make corrections, if necessary. (The transcripts were later returned to the researcher in a self-addressed return envelope, and any corrections were made to the transcript before performing qualitative analysis.) At the conclusion of each focus group discussion, participants were given a small gift as thanks. In every district or surrounding community a gift card of $20 value was available from a local establishment; this was intended to support the economy of the location of the individual group meetings as well as to provide a useful gift to the participants.

Quantitative Analysis of Data

The bulk of the quantitative analysis for the study was performed on the survey responses received from property owners in each historic district selected. The questions were written with a variety of response formats including single response options such as “yes/no” and short answer. Three questions—those inquiring about income range for the household or business, marital status, and race/ethnicity—provided multiple options from which respondents then selected one; the response options for these questions were individually coded to facilitate statistical analysis. Using the statistical analysis software SAS (version 9.1), descriptive statistics were then compiled for each of the survey questions, and then for groups such as the different types of district represented (commercial and residential) and the different types of areas (rural and urban).

While most of the responses were analyzed individually, in the following cases responses were combined due to the small number of responses:

- Question 7: What is your profession? Responses were grouped according to categories established by the Bureau of Labor Statistics; for five responses (“retired,” “self-employed,” “student,” “homemaker,” and “investor”) there was no pre-established code and these were given a specialized code.
- Question 8: What is your age range? Response options “18-25” and “26-35” were grouped together.

- Question 9: What is the income range for your household/business? All income ranges over $199,000 were grouped together.
- Question 10: What is the marital status of the primary owner? Response options "married" and "widowed" were grouped together.
- Question 12: What is the race/ethnicity of the primary owner? All response options other than Caucasian were grouped together.

For the statistical analysis of Question 1 (In what year was your property built?) and Question 2 (How long have your owned this property?), t-tests were performed on the mean responses to test for significance between the rural and urban groups, between the commercial and residential groups, and between those who later participated in the focus groups and those who did not. For the remaining questions, chi-square tests were performed to test for significance in the distribution of responses for those same groups; in the cases of Questions 7 through 11, pairwise chi-square tests were also performed to determine which categories, if any, might be significantly different. For those sample sizes too small to perform a chi-square test, Fisher's exact test was performed instead.

Although the emphasis of the focus group discussions was on understanding the experience of why people choose to own property in Oklahoma historic districts, there was a small amount of quantitative analysis that could be done in relation to the outcomes of those transcripts. This included determining the frequency and percentage of themes that are present for each historic district sampled, determining the frequency and percentage of districts represented by each theme, determining the frequency and percentage of themes represented in each district that fit into the previously discussed categories of psychosocial or financial factors that might influence or impact property ownership, and determining the frequency and percentage of themes represented in each type of district (commercial or residential). This information allowed the researcher to understand how many of the themes are present for each district and compare these figures for each type of district (commercial or residential), as well as across all the districts.

Qualitative Analysis of Data

Qualitative analysis of transcripts was conducted following the completion of all focus groups and the return of all transcripts from participants. Once all corrections were made to the edited focus group transcripts, individual files were uploaded into NVivo (version 10) qualitative analysis software. Individual themes or "nodes" were identified from previous literature as well as from common terms or phrases observed by the researcher during focus group discussions and review of all transcripts. Each transcript was reviewed repeatedly and individual phrases coded into the specific themes; in some cases a phrase applied to more than one theme and was coded accordingly.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Procedure

One of the primary assumptions made by the researcher was the truthfulness of survey respondents and focus group participants in the information they provided. Because there was no reward for correct information or punishment for incorrect information, there was also no incentive for participants to falsify their reports. However, there is always a concern that the focus group participants, in particular, might have responded to the questions and other participants' comments in order to provide what they perceived was expected by the researcher and may not have reported their actual beliefs or feelings, or may have simply given incorrect information. In addition, although the researcher was gratified to find the focus group participants to be especially enthusiastic about the study, this was also a distinct limitation. Those who replied to the introductory survey were, in all likelihood, already interested in preservation and owning property in a historic district, particularly those who volunteered for further participation in the focus groups. This may have skewed the data since not all property owners in a district were represented.

There were also limitations in both the quantitative and qualitative analysis of the data collected. The quantitative analysis of the survey responses was compromised in some measure by the responses themselves. As stated in the cover letter to property owners that accompanied the surveys, the owners were at liberty to answer any or all questions; this resulted in some surveys that were incomplete. Therefore, the sample size used for analysis for some questions was smaller than the sample size used for other questions and some categories were combined for analysis, as discussed earlier. Also, there were examples of responses that could not have been accurate, and were probably the result of participants misunderstanding the question. For example, several respondents indicated that they knew their property was on the National Register of Historic Places when purchased, but the properties were reported as being purchased prior to the actual date of National Register listing; this implies that the respondents may not have understood exactly what National Register listing meant and may have been referring to the fact that they knew their property was very old.

Limitations to the qualitative analysis may have resulted from inaccuracies present in the focus group responses as well as small sample sizes in some cases.

Although it was assumed by the researcher that the participants were being truthful in their responses (they had nothing to gain or lose by not being truthful), there is always the possibility that they were responding to questions and other participants' comments in order to provide what they perceived was expected by the researcher, and may not have reported their actual beliefs or feelings, or may have reported incorrect infomation. Also, in the focus groups that were actually interviews because there was only a single participant present, the methodology fails to achieve the intent of enriching the conversation through the interactions between participants. In these cases, not only does the resulting information reflect only one perspective and set of experiences, but it also lacks any interaction except with the researcher.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

This chapter will begin with a summary of the characteristics of the study sample and then address the findings as they pertain to each of the research questions. The characteristics of the study sample will be broken into two sections: one for those who only responded to the demographic survey and a second section for those who responded to the survey and went on to participate in the focus group discussions.

Characteristics of Survey Respondents

As stated in the previous chapter, respondents returned 336 surveys from the 2,261 that reached property owners within the selected districts for a 14.9% initial return rate; after distributing 1,976 reminder postcards to those not responding after approximately three weeks, an additional 81 surveys were received for a secondary return rate of 4.0%. This resulted in a total number of survey responses of 417 for an overall response rate of 18.4%. The individual response rate for each of the selected historic districts can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2

Survey Response Rate per District

District	Surveys distributed*	Surveys returned	Response rate
Waverley Historic District	235	70	29.8%
Newkirk Central Business District	32	14	43.8%
Kendall Place Historic District	87	18	20.7%
Miami Downtown Historic District	31	7	22.6%
Carlton Place Historic District	20	6	30.0%
Brady Historic District	13	5	38.5%
Hugo Historic District	29	7	24.1%
Pauls Valley Historic District	85	17	20.0%
Guthrie Historic District	1,384	205	14.8%
Perkins Downtown Historic District	17	3	17.6%
Paseo Neighborhood Historic District	191	43	22.5%
Automobile Alley Historic District	61	5	8.2%
Chickasha Downtown Historic District	76	17	22.4%
Totals	2,261	417	18.4%

Note. * Indicates the number of surveys that reached the districts after the surveys labeled "Unable to Forward" were returned to sender.

Survey responses were analyzed as an aggregate and then three different comparisons made: rural districts vs. urban districts, residential districts vs. commercial districts, and respondents who did participate in a subsequent focus group vs. those who did not. Descriptive statistics were generated from the survey responses and are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Rural districts vs. urban districts.

For those who owned property in rural districts, there was a statistically significant difference from those in urban districts in the following categories: (a) length of time they owned the property, (b) knowledge that the property was located within a historic district, (c) owning other property that was also in a historic district, (d) age range of respondents, and (e) marital status of the primary owners. Rural owners reported owning their property for an average of 16.8 years compared with 10.2 years for those in an urban district. However, those owning property in an urban district were more likely to recognize that it was located within a historic district (66.7%) compared to those in rural districts (51.8%). Urban property owners were also significantly more likely to own additional property that was also in a historic district—60.9%—compared with 23.8 % for rural property owners. The age range for property owners was also statistically significant for these groups, with urban owners more likely to be in the 18 – 35 age range (24.6% vs. 9.0%), and rural owners more likely to be in the 66 – 75 age range (20.5% vs. 5.3%). The marital status of property owners was also significantly different between rural and urban districts; responses from rural districts indicated that 70.5% of the owners were married or widowed compared with 56.1% of urban owners. Conversely, 24.6% of the respondents from urban districts were reported as single compared with only 7.8% of rural property owners.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics Derived from Survey Responses—Aggregate and Location

				Location	
Ques.	Categ.	Stat.	All	Rural	Urban
1	-	M	1924	1924	1926
		p*		0.4847	
2	-	M	15.9	16.8	10.2
		p*		**0.0003**	
3	-	(%)	53.9	51.8	66.7
		p*		**0.0371**	
4		(%)	8.9	9.5	5.2
		p*		0.2850	
5	-	(%)	13.7	12.4	21.1
		p*		0.0788	
6a	-	(%)	52.2	53.5	43.9
		p		0.1745	
6b	-	(%)	27.9	23.8	60.9
		p*		**0.0002**	
7	Ret.	(%)	29.8	31.7	27.5
	Sales	(%)	9.8	10.2	7.8
	Educ.	(%)	8.5	9.2	3.9
	Health.	(%)	7.4	7	9.8
	Mgmt.	(%)	7.1	6.7	9.8
		p*		0.5524	
8	18 - 35	(%)	11.2	9.0	24.6
	36 - 45	(%)	13.6	13.6	14.0
	46 - 55	(%)	17.6	18.2	14.0
	56 - 65	(%)	26.1	24.3	36.8
	66 - 75	(%)	18.4	20.5	5.3
	over 75	(%)	13.2	14.5	5.3
		p*		**0.0003**	
9	<25	(%)	14.4	14.9	11.3
	25-49	(%)	25.5	25.4	26.4
	50-99	(%)	32.1	33.0	26.4
	100-149	(%)	12.0	11.8	13.2
	150-199	(%)	5.2	5.4	3.8
	>200	(%)	10.9	9.5	18.9
		p*		0.4159	

(table continues)

(continued)

Ques.	Categ.	Stat.	All	Location: Rural	Location: Urban
10	Mar/Wid	(%)	68.5	70.5	56.1
	Single	(%)	10.2	7.8	24.6
	Div.	(%)	17.6	17.9	15.8
	S.w/S.O.	(%)	3.7	3.8	3.5
		p*		**0.0017**	
11	Male	(%)	29.9	30.8	24.1
	Female	(%)	34.3	32.3	46.6
	Both	(%)	35.8	36.9	29.3
		p*		0.1058	
12	Caucasian	(%)	81.1	79.8	89.5
		p*		0.0826	

Note. Refer to Appendices D and E for complete list of survey questions. Statistically significant p-values are indicated in boldface. M = Sample mean; Mar/Wid = Married/Widowed; Div = Divorced; S. w/S.O. = Single with Significant Other. [a]Age range represented in years. [b]Income range represented in $1000s.
* $p < .05$ considered statistically significant. Refer to Appendices D and E for survey questions.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics Derived from Survey Responses—Type and Focus Group

Surv. Ques.	Categ.	Stat.	District Type: Res.	District Type: Comm.	Focus Group: Yes	Focus Group: No
1	-	M	1924	1922	1914	1925
		p*	0.4649		**0.0004**	
2	-	M	14.7	21.4	15.2	16.0
		p*	**0.0050**		0.6982	
3	-	(%)	59.0	31.0	62.8	52.9
		p*	**<.0001**		0.2175	
4	-	(%)	9.0	8.2	13.3	8.3
		p*	0.8298		0.2637	
5	-	(%)	12.4	19.7	29.6	11.7
		p*	0.1007		**0.0011**	
6a	-	(%)	45.5	82.4	68.9	50.1
		p	**<.0001**		**0.0175**	

(table continues)

(continued)

Surv. Ques.	Categ.	Stat.	District Type Res.	Comm.	Focus Group Yes	No
6b	-	(%)	29.5	24.1	33.3	27.0
		p*	0.4454		0.4760	
7	Ret.	(%)	34.0	10.6	27.3	30.1
	Sales	(%)	8.0	18.2	9.1	9.9
	Educ.	(%)	9.0	6.1	11.4	8.1
	Health.	(%)	9.7	1.5	6.8	7.5
	Mgmt.	(%)	7.0	7.6	13.6	6.2
		p*	0.0006		0.5253	
8	18 - 35	(%)	12.7	4.2	11.6	11.1
	36 - 45	(%)	13.3	15.3	7.0	14.4
	46 - 55	(%)	17.5	18.1	14.0	18.1
	56 - 65	(%)	25.1	30.6	27.9	25.8
	66 - 75	(%)	18.1	19.4	34.9	16.4
	over 75	(%)	13.3	12.5	4.7	14.2
		p*	0.4417		0.0375	
9	<25	(%)	15	11.5	171	14.1
	25-49	(%)	28.3	11.5	19.5	26.3
	50-99	(%)	35.2	16.4	34.1	31.8
	100-149	(%)	12.7	8.2	9.8	12.2
	150-199	(%)	3.6	13.1	9.8	4.6
	>200	(%)	52	39.3	9.8	11.0
		p*	<.0001		0.6737	
10	Mar/Wid	(%)	66.9	765.0	61.4	69.4
	Single	(%)	10.8	7.4	11.4	10.0
	Div.	(%)	18.2	14.7	25.0	16.7
	S.w/S.O.	(%)	4.2	1.5	2.3	3.9
		p*	0.4059		0.5018	
11	Male	(%)	25.6	50.0	18.2	31.3
	Female	(%)	37.4	20.0	43.2	33.2
	Both	(%)	37.1	30.0	38.6	35.5
		p*	0.0002		0.1745	
12	Caucasian	(%)	79.7	88.2	84.1	80.8
		p*	0.1010		0.5962	

Note. Refer to Appendices D and E for complete list of survey questions. Statistically significant p-values are indicated in boldface. M = Sample mean. Mar/Wid = Married/Widowed; Div = Divorced; S. w/S.O. = Single with Significant Other. [a]Age range represented in years. [b]Income range represented in $1000s.
* $p < .05$ considered statistically significant. Refer to Appendices D and E for survey questions.

Residential districts vs. commercial districts.

When analyzed separately, responses from property owners in residential districts differed significantly from those provided by property owners in commercial districts in the following categories: (a) length of time they owned the property, (b) knowledge that the property was located within a historic district, (c) currently owning additional property, (d) profession, (e) income range, and (f) gender. A wide variety of professions was represented in the survey responses; to facilitate statistical analysis, these were grouped into categories based on the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). Grouping resulted in the five categories shown in Table 3 for this question—Retired; Sales and Related; Education, Training, and Library; Healthcare Practitioners and Technical; and Management.

In commercial districts, the average length of time of property ownership was 21.4 years compared with 14.7 years for residential districts. However, 59.0% of residential property owners recognized that their property was located within a historic district compared with 31.0% of commercial owners. A significant number of commercial property owners—82.4%—owned additional property, compared with only 45.5% of residential owners. With respect to income, 39.3% of commercial property owners had annual income in the $200,000 or above range, compared to 35.2% of residential owners, whose annual income was reported to be in the $50,000 to $99,000 range. There was also a significant difference in the gender distribution of property owners in these districts, with 50.0% of commercial property owners being Male, compared with 37.4% of residential properties owned by Females.

Characteristics of Focus Group Participants

The professions reported by these participants included 32 different employment types, including actor, nurse, psychologist, engineer, musician and electrician, as well as retired. As stated in the previous section, these responses were grouped into five categories to facilitate statistical analysis; the majority of focus group participants in this study were retired (27.3%), with the remaining participants grouped into Management (13.6%); Education, Training, and Library (11.4%); Sales and Related (9.1%); and, finally, Healthcare Practitioners and Technical (6.8%). The age of these participants spanned every category included in the study, with the highest percentage of participants (34.9%) in the 66–75 year range, and the lowest percentage (4.7%) in the over 75 year range. The most common income range for the focus group participants was between $50,000 and $99,000, with 34.1% falling into this category, with the next most common income ranges $25,000–$49,000 (19.5%) and less than $25,000 (17.1%); for those annual income ranges lying at or above $100,000, the percentage represented by the participants was equal in all categories, at 9.8%. The percentage of focus group participants who reported being married or widowed was the overwhelming majority at 61.4%, with the next most common category—divorced—reported by 25% of the participants. The gender of the majority of property owners in the focus groups was female (43.2%), with joint male and female owners the next largest group, at 38.6%. The ethnicity of the focus group participants was overwhelmingly Caucasian at 84.1%.

Results

Surveys.

Survey responses were analyzed to compare characteristics for those survey respondents who went on to participate in a focus group discussion compared with those who did not. For these groups, statistically significant differences were found in the following characteristics: (a) the year in which their properties were built, (b) having owned property in a historic district in the past, (c) currently owning additional property, and (d) the age range of the participants. For those who participated in a focus group, the average year in which their property was built was 1914, compared to an average year built of 1925 for those who did not participate further than responding to the survey. Those who participated in the focus groups were also more likely to have owned property in a historic district in the past—29.6%—compared with 11.7% of the non-focus group respondents. Focus group participants were also more likely to currently own additional property—68.9% vs. 50.1%. The age range of focus group participants was significantly different from non-participants. For those who did not participate in a focus group, the majority (25.8%) fell into the 56 to 65 age range. These figures compare with those who went on to participate in a focus group, the majority of which fell into the 66 to 75 age range.

Focus groups.

Participant responses were transcribed and themes were developed from literature, phrases heard frequently from participants, and from repeated review of focus group transcripts to culminate in 30 main themes. The identified themes, along with brief descriptions, are as follows (listed in alphabetic order):

- **Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features –** appreciation of the ornamental nature of historic properties
- **Availability of Construction Resources –** presence or lack of availability of construction personnel or materials appropriate for historic rehabilitations
- **Better Quality of Construction –** quality of materials and methods used for construction in the past compared to modern construction
- **Better Value –** perception that historic properties are a better economic value than newer construction; more space available in a historic building for the same price as newer, smaller construction
- **Community Revitalization –** renewed interest in utilizing historic properties for new uses or rehabilitating for an existing use
- **Consistency of Neighborhood –** perception that the historic district will be resistant to extreme changes over time, including the risk of infill
- **Convenient Location –** desired locations frequented by property owners are within walking distance and do not require the use of a car to visit; location has convenient access for clients and exposure for potential clients
- **Desire for Uniqueness –** appreciation of the difference between historic properties and newer properties; also acknowledges the scarcity of historic building stock
- **Difficulty Finding Materials –** sizes of new construction materials are different from historic materials and may be prohibitively expensive

- **Difficulty Working With Preservation System –** confusion about meeting requirements of appropriate preservation oversight body
- **Diversity of Architectural Styles –** heterogeneous nature of historic properties and districts compared to newer construction
- **Energy Efficiency –** constraint of high heating and cooling costs for historic properties due to old construction
- **Enjoy Working on a Project –** like to be physically and mentally active by working on historic properties and enjoying the outcome
- **Financial Investment –** represents both advantages and disadvantages of owning historic property
- **Good for Families –** perception by property owners that the historic district has attributes desirable for families raising children
- **Heritage Tourism –** utilization of historic properties to encourage visitors to an area as part of economic revitalization efforts
- **Higher Property Value –** represents local market value of real estate
- **Historic Character –** architectural and cultural features of historic properties
- **Infrastructure –** difficulties in historic areas due to out of date equipment that is inadequate for contemporary demands
- **Neighborhood Features –** presence of features such as sidewalks and mature trees that are not always seen in newer neighborhoods
- **New Business Coming In –** historic properties being used to house businesses new to the area
- **Place Attachment –** desire to remain in the community

- **Sense of Community –** perception that other property owners are participants in a community that works together for desired goals
- **Sense of History –** perception that elements from the past are a contributing part of contemporary life
- **Sense of Identity –** property ownership in a historic district contributes to the owner's perception of self
- **Sense of Nostalgia –** desire for aspects of life in the past that are not present today
- **Stewardship –** sense of duty to care for resources so they are available for future generations
- **Sustainability** – efforts to be more environmentally and socially conscious
- **Tax Incentives –** utilized by property owners of revenue-producing properties to offset costs of ownership and rehabilitation
- **Willingness to Compromise –** adaptation of contemporary lifestyles to accommodate historic building features

A specific comment by a focus group participant that related to the topic of each theme constituted evidence of the theme in the individual district. This evidence was documented for the whole of the focus groups and then themes were divided into categories as they pertained to each of the research questions; these categories were psychosocial vs. financial factors (provides information for the first research question) and property owners in residential districts vs. property owners in commercial districts (provides information for the second research question). Table 5 displays aggregate statistics for each theme discussed across the individual focus groups. Table 6 displays results for all districts as they relate to those themes divided into psychosocial factors and financial factors, and Tables 7 and 8 display results for all themes applied to residential and commercial districts, respectively.

Looking at the aggregate of all focus groups (Table 5), certain themes had meaningful presence among the participants. This was determined by the number of focus groups in which comments attributable to the theme were discussed; meaningfulness was ascribed to those themes seen in 80% or more of the focus groups. This level was established to capture those themes present at a very high frequency (indicating their importance to the property owners) but not to set the level so high that only a few themes would be considered important, which might exclude valuable information. For the aggregate of the focus groups, the themes that had a meaningful level of presence were *Financial Investment* (100%), *Place Attachment* (94%), *Convenient Location* (89%), *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features* (83%), and *Sense of Community* (83%).

In Table 6, themes were divided into those that pertain to the psychosocial and financial factors discussed in the review of literature. As with the results of the aggregate of all focus groups, determination of meaningfulness was established for those themes present in 80% or more of the focus group discussions. For the psychosocial factors, meaningful themes were *Place Attachment* (94%), *Convenient Location* (89%), *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features* (83%), and *Sense of Community* (83%). Looking at the financial factors seen in focus group discussions, only one—*Financial Investment*—had a meaningful presence among the focus groups, but it was represented in 100% of the discussions, an indicator of the level of importance for all property owners.

Tables 7 and 8 document the frequency of participant responses for those districts that are primarily residential and those that are primarily commercial, respectively. Based on the responses, themes considered meaningful to the focus groups discussed in residential districts were *Financial Investment* (100%), *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features* (92%), *Convenient Location* (92%), *Place Attachment* (92%), *Consistency of Neighborhood* (83%), *Historic Character* (83%), and *Sense of Community* (83%). For those focus groups representing commercial districts, *Financial Investment* (100%), *Place Attachment* (100%), *Stewardship* (100%), *Availability of Construction Resources* (83%), *Convenient Location* (83%), *Sense of Community* (83%), and *Sense of History* (83%) and were viewed as meaningful based on the level of discussion related to each theme.

Table 5

Identification and Frequency of Themes for All Focus Groups

Theme	Discussed in districts	Frequency
Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features	15 / 18	83%
Availability of Construction Resources	12 / 18	67%
Better Quality of Construction	10 / 18	56%
Better Value	10 / 18	56%
Community Revitalization	9 / 18	50%
Consistency of Neighborhood	12 / 18	67%
Convenient Location	16 / 18	89%
Desire for Uniqueness	8 / 18	44%
Difficulty Finding Materials	4 / 18	22%
Difficulty Working with Preservation System	10 / 18	56%
Diversity of Architectural Styles	6 / 18	33%
Energy Efficiency	3 / 18	17%
Enjoy Working on a Project	9 / 18	50%
Financial Investment	18 / 18	100%
Good for Families	6 / 18	33%
Heritage Tourism	5 / 18	28%
Higher Property Value	8 / 18	44%
Historic Character	14 / 18	78%
Infrastructure	1 / 18	6%
Neighborhood Features	11 / 18	61%
New Business Coming In	6 / 18	33%
Place Attachment	17 / 18	94%
Sense of Community	15 / 18	83%
Sense of History	14 / 18	78%
Sense of Identity	10 / 18	56%
Sense of Nostalgia	5 / 18	28%
Stewardship	14 / 18	78%
Sustainability	6 / 18	33%
Tax Incentives	4 / 18	22%
Willingness to Compromise	8 / 18	44%

Table 6

Identification and Frequency of Themes as Divided Into Psychosocial and Financial Factors

Psychosocial factors	Discussed in districts	Frequency
Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features	15 / 18	83%
Consistency of Neighborhood	12 / 18	67%
Convenient Location	16 / 18	89%
Desire for Uniqueness	8 / 18	44%
Diversity of Architectural Styles	6 / 18	33%
Enjoy Working on a Project	9 / 18	50%
Good for Families	6 / 18	33%
Historic Character	14 / 18	78%
Neighborhood Features	11 / 18	61%
Place Attachment	17 / 18	94%
Sense of Community	15 / 18	83%
Sense of History	14 / 18	78%
Sense of Identity	10 / 18	56%
Sense of Nostalgia	5 / 18	28%
Stewardship	14 / 18	78%
Willingness to Compromise	8 / 18	44%

Financial factors	Discussed in districts	Frequency
Availability of Construction Resources	12 / 18	67%
Better Quality of Construction	10 / 18	56%
Better Value	10 / 18	56%
Community Revitalization	9 / 18	50%
Difficulty Finding Materials	4 / 18	22%
Difficulty Working with Preservation System	10 / 18	56%
Energy Efficiency	3 / 18	17%
Financial Investment	18 / 18	100%
Heritage Tourism	5 / 18	28%
Higher Property Value	8 / 18	44%
Infrastructure	1 / 18	6%
New Business Coming In	6 / 18	33%
Sustainability	6 / 18	33%
Tax Incentives	4 / 18	22%

Table 7

Identification and Frequency of Themes Applied to Residential Districts

Theme	Discussed in districts	Frequency
Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features	11 / 12	92%
Availability of Construction Resources	7 / 12	58%
Better Quality of Construction	8 / 12	67%
Better Value	8 / 12	67%
Community Revitalization	5 / 12	42%
Consistency of Neighborhood	10 / 12	83%
Convenient Location	11 / 12	92%
Desire for Uniqueness	6 / 12	50%
Difficulty Finding Materials	4 / 12	33%
Difficulty Working with Preservation System	9 / 12	75%
Diversity of Architectural Styles	5 / 12	42%
Energy Efficiency	2 / 12	17%
Enjoy Working on a Project	9 / 12	75%
Financial Investment	12 / 12	100%
Good for Families	5 / 12	42%
Heritage Tourism	3 / 12	25%
Higher Property Value	5 / 12	42%
Historic Character	10 / 12	83%
Infrastructure	0 / 12	0%
Neighborhood Features	9 / 12	75%
New Business Coming In	2 / 12	17%
Place Attachment	11 / 12	92%
Sense of Community	10 / 12	83%
Sense of History	9 / 12	75%
Sense of Identity	7 / 12	58%
Sense of Nostalgia	4 / 12	33%
Stewardship	8 / 12	67%
Sustainability	4 / 12	33%
Tax Incentives	0 / 12	0%
Willingness to Compromise	6 / 12	50%

Table 8

Identification and Frequency of Themes Applied to Commercial Districts

Theme	Discussed in districts	Frequency
Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features	4 / 6	67%
Availability of Construction Resources	5 / 6	83%
Better Quality of Construction	2 / 6	33%
Better Value	2 / 6	33%
Community Revitalization	4 / 6	67%
Consistency of Neighborhood	2 / 6	33%
Convenient Location	5 / 6	83%
Desire for Uniqueness	2 / 6	33%
Difficulty Finding Materials	0 / 6	0%
Difficulty Working with Preservation System	1 / 6	17%
Diversity of Architectural Styles	1 / 6	17%
Energy Efficiency	1 / 6	17%
Enjoy Working on a Project	0 / 6	0%
Financial Investment	6 / 6	100%
Good for Families	1 / 6	17%
Heritage Tourism	2 / 6	33%
Higher Property Value	3 / 6	50%
Historic Character	4 / 6	67%
Infrastructure	1 / 6	17%
Neighborhood Features	2 / 6	33%
New Business Coming In	4 / 6	67%
Place Attachment	6 / 6	100%
Sense of Community	5 / 6	83%
Sense of History	5 / 6	83%
Sense of Identity	2 / 6	33%
Sense of Nostalgia	1 / 6	17%
Stewardship	6 / 6	100%
Sustainability	2 / 6	33%
Tax Incentives	4 / 6	67%
Willingness to Compromise	2 / 6	33%

Application of Themes to Research Questions

Each of the themes identified from focus group participant responses can be categorized into the three research questions for this study. As indicated above and seen in Tables 5 and 6, themes present in meaningful frequencies (80% or above) are the same for both the aggregate of the responses as well as when further divided into psychosocial and financial factors. These themes provide information that helps answer the first research question discussed in depth below. Additional division of the aggregate responses into residential and commercial districts provides evidence of themes seen in meaningful frequencies (80% or above) that help provide information related to the second research question; these frequencies can be seen in Tables 7 and 8.

While the determination of meaningfulness was established at frequencies of 80% or higher, there are several remaining themes discussed by focus group participants below that level that may or may not provide meaningful evidence. Themes mentioned in 50% to 80% of the focus groups were *Availability of Construction Resources, Better Quality of Construction, Better Value, Community Revitalization, Consistency of Neighborhood, Difficulty Working with Preservation System, Enjoy Working on a Project, Historic Character, Neighborhood Features, Sense of History, Sense of Identity*, and *Stewardship*. Of these, four themes—*Consistency of Neighborhood, Historic Character, Sense of History,* and *Stewardship*—had meaningful presence when the aggregate is divided in residential and commercial districts and contribute to information related to the second research question. Although each of the themes that emerged from literature and focus group discussions represents an impact or influence on property owners in at least one focus group, and by extension the district in question, several are mentioned in the aggregate responses in such limited quantities (less than 50% of the focus groups) that they will not be discussed further. These are *Desire for Uniqueness, Difficulty Finding Materials, Diversity of Architectural Styles, Energy Efficiency, Good for Families, Heritage Tourism, Higher Property Value, Infrastructure, New Business Coming In, Sense of Nostalgia, Sustainability, Tax Incentives,* and *Willingness to Compromise*.

Based on the context of participant comments, some of the themes discussed in 50% to 80% of the focus groups were seen in slightly higher frequencies in Tables 7 and 8 than in Table 5, and so would most appropriately pertain to the second research question; these are *Community Revitalization, Enjoy Working on a Project, Neighborhood Features*, and *Sense of Identity.* Although the frequency with which these themes were discussed was not extremely low, it also was not high enough in either the aggregate responses or any subsequent division to warrant a determination of meaningfulness, and therefore they will not be discussed further. The remainder of those themes discussed in 50% to 80% of the focus groups provide information related to the third research question that addresses the factors that have an impact on ownership; these are *Availability of Construction Resources, Better Quality of Construction, Better Value, and Difficulty Working with Preservation System*. However, based on participant responses, *Better Quality of Construction* and *Better Value* seemed to exert a lesser impact on ownership, and will not be discussed further. Table 9 illustrates the application of each theme to a relevant research question, with those themes considered meaningful discussed in depth below.

Table 9

Application of Themes to Research Questions

Theme	Res. Ques. 1	Res. Ques. 2	Res. Ques. 3
Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features	●	●◆	
Availability of Construction Resources			●
Better Quality of Construction			✖
Better Value			✖
Community Revitalization		✖	
Consistency of Neighborhood		●◆	
Convenient Location	●	●◆▣	
Desire for Uniqueness	✖		
Difficulty Finding Materials			✖
Difficulty Working with Pres. System			●
Diversity of Architectural Styles	✖		
Energy Efficiency			✖
Enjoy Working on a Project		✖	
Financial Investment	●	●◆▣	●
Good for Families	✖		
Heritage Tourism		✖	
Higher Property Value	✖		
Historic Character		●◆	
Infrastructure			✖
Neighborhood Features		✖	
New Business Coming In		✖	
Place Attachment	●	●◆▣	
Sense of Community	●	●◆▣	
Sense of History		●▣	
Sense of Identity		✖	
Sense of Nostalgia	✖		
Stewardship		●▣	
Sustainability	✖		
Tax Incentives		✖	
Willingness to Compromise			✖

Note. ●Indicates meaningful frequency over 80%; ◆Indicates residential district; ▣Indicates commercial district; ✖Indicates frequency below meaningful levels—theme is not discussed further.

Why do people own property in a historic district in Oklahoma?

Evaluating the aggregate responses of the focus groups seen in Table 5, two themes emerged as prevalent factors in an extremely high number of districts; these were *Financial Investment*—discussed in 100% of the focus groups—and *Place Attachment*, which was mentioned in 94% of the focus groups, with only the first group held in Guthrie having no discussion attributable to this theme. As a reminder, earlier in this chapter, *Financial Investment* was defined as representing "both the advantages and disadvantages of owning historic property," and *Place Attachment* was defined as "the desire to remain in the community." Based on the percentage of representation among the focus group discussions, these factors representing both psychosocial and financial factors mentioned in the review of literature were virtually equal in their importance to property owners.

Additional themes were evident in the focus group discussions in slightly smaller, but still important, percentages; these were *Convenient Location* (discussed in 89% of the groups); *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features* (discussed in 83% of the groups), and a *Sense of Community* (mentioned in 83% of the groups). These were defined earlier in this chapter respectively as "desired locations frequented by property owners are within walking distance and do not require the use of a car to visit; location has convenient access for clients and exposure for potential clients," "appreciation of the ornamental nature of historic properties," and finally "perception that other property owners are participants in a community that works together for desired goals." Description of participant comments attributed to each of these themes follows.

Financial investment.

Comments discussing the financial advantages of owning property in a historic district were not as frequent as those related to the impact on the owner's financial investment. However, several owners mentioned benefits, such as the opportunity to apply for matching funds for repairs or refurbishment through either the local jurisdiction or the national preservation organizations, or the potential for converting a portion of the property for rental purposes due to the large size of the home; the practice of purchasing property solely for rental purposes was reported to have increased in some areas. In some cases this was stated with a negative attitude, but others had a more positive impression. One participant commented,

> I happen to know two or three investors who have bought property back in that area and they've got the money to fix them up and they're fixing them up. In some cases they're renting them out, and in other cases they fix them up and sell them. And it's helping the whole area out.

Many of the positive comments related to the owner's financial investment were related to the degree the property improved over time; properties are often available to purchase very inexpensively, and a high return on investment often encouraged people to take on property in a historic district that they might otherwise forego. For example, one participant stated, "We paid $55,000 for it and I listed it with [local realtor]; he has it up for $198,000. That's how much the property value has increased." Another commented that she "bought a house for $1,000…I bought it for taxes, and I rented it out for a while, and then I sold it for $56,000." This return on investment also applies to those who own property strictly for rental purposes; one property owner in the Paseo Neighborhood Historic District stated, "rent in the Paseo is outrageous…the house behind me is three bedrooms and two bathrooms, and it rents for $875 a month. My house is five bedrooms and three bathrooms…and my mortgage is less than that."

Place attachment.

Place Attachment was the other prevalent theme seen throughout the districts, and it was discussed in all but one of the focus groups. Evidence of this theme was in a variety of contexts, ranging from being part of the energizing environment of an urban commercial district or just "want[ing] to own a building on Main Street," to the commonly mentioned act of coming "home." One participant discussing the benefits of historic property in an urban commercial district explained the situation:

> You don't ever think about loading up the kids and going down to Wal-Mart and hanging out in the parking lot. But you would bring them down to Kaiser's and get an ice cream…just walk around, just sight see. And you're not going to do that in the suburbs.

Many participants specifically discussed their desire to own property "back home;" usually this occurred after a period of time during which they lived or worked out of state or in a different city. When asked about why they chose the particular property they currently owned, many gave similar responses: "We were both from Enid and we were in the Air Force during Vietnam, and we came back to Enid. Both of my parents were here…it was home." Another comment related to a specific city was "I decided in the sixth grade that I was going to go to medical school and come back to Guthrie." One participant was particularly adamant about remaining in the Guthrie area: “I was born and raised here, and I told my wife, ‘I’m not leaving,’ and she said ‘OK.’ She’s from… Owasso, and so I got her to move down here with me.” He went on to say, “I grew up and know everyone here. I volunteer with my church, I volunteer with the Kiwanis, I volunteer with the Chamber [of Commerce]. I’m just so rooted here.” Another mentioned,

> I had a ten year absence involving going to college, the military, and law school…then I came back and married a local girl…. I could have gone anywhere, but I came back to Pauls Valley because I thought it was a good place to raise a family.

This participant went on to say,

> My roots, I feel like, they really run deep. My grandfather was US Deputy Marshall in Indian Territory….my children’s great-great grandfather actually received a land grant in what is called the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek…so my family goes all the way back to when the Indians acquired the land, and there’s just a sense of connectedness that I have.

He also elaborated on why the Pauls Valley Historic District, which is the downtown central business district for the city, is so meaningful in the history of the city. He explained, “People walking down the streets, and stores open until late; that’s part of my memory of Pauls Valley.” He contrasted that with newer construction on the outskirts of town: “To me that’s not Pauls Valley; Pauls Valley *is* what is downtown.”

Several participants specifically mentioned the draw of Oklahoma in their decision to return from living in other locations. One said,

> I'm Oklahoma. My great-grandfather made the Run, my parents moved here, my dad's family…[has] an addition named after them…so this was home…I left because I got married and was in the military. We went to California, and went to Washington, and have lived in several places, but I always came back home.

One participant mentioned a specific feature of her home that contributes to her connection to the location:

> One of the things we have in our house is a wall in our closet that has everybody's height on it that has been measured since [her husband's] Dad bought the house….They're from [a] parakeet all the way up to the guys who came in to put in our air conditioning that I got mad about….It's something in the family when the kids come to the house, everybody gets measured. You wouldn't have that otherwise.

Convenient Location.

The importance of location is well known, and this is no different for those who own property in historic districts. However, the reasons why the location is important vary; some owners mentioned location as a reason for purchasing their property due to its easy access or prominent appearance as a lure for potential clients, while others enjoyed the ability to walk to desired activities. One participant who owned property in a central business district commented that he tells clients, "I'm easy to find, just come to downtown Chickasha." Another participant enjoyed the benefits of his location for its ease in the winter: "It faces south and that really helps you in the winter when you have ice and snow and such." Another commercial property owner stated:

> Ideally we wanted to be on Chickasaw or Paul Street…those are the main streets in town; they are the busiest streets in town so that seems to be where the main flow of traffic is, so we have the best opportunity for people to see our business.

Many focus groups participants mentioned selecting their location because of its nearness to family members; in some cases looking for a historic property was coincidental, and in others purposeful. One participant stated,

> My grandma and my family are all around the Guthrie area, so I decided to come here and rent for a while…but when I moved here I saw the [old houses] and really fell in love with them and knew that I wanted to purchase a historic home.

Another stated that he had family members in the community and "we were driving over here every Sunday to go to church…We had already been looking over here, and all of what we were looking at were old homes; we didn't look at anything even close to new [construction]."

Several participants stated they selected the community they lived in as well as the specific property based on its proximity to their place of work, while others made their selection for its convenience to other activities. Many selected the community because of the small-town atmosphere, but valued its closeness to a larger city with more amenities such as healthcare, shopping, and a major airport. One participant phrased this as, “We’ve got the advantages of Oklahoma City without having the problems of Oklahoma City.” Another stated,

> I didn’t have to change my dentist; I could still go over to Oklahoma City twice a year and get my teeth cleaned. Everything’s available, everything’s handy except that I’m living in this nice little small place where I know people.

While the proximity to a larger metropolitan area appealed to some, several people enjoyed the ability to walk to locations within their own community that their property provided. One stated,

> Since I’m so close to town, I can walk to any restaurant, or to the store…If I were to lose…my ability to drive because I have poor vision or something could happen as I age, then I could still walk.

Although many of the historic districts selected for this study were in smaller communities, the ability to walk to desired locations was also mentioned by those who own property in larger districts in more urban areas.

Aesthetic value of architectural features.

When looking at the comments participants made with regard to the aesthetic qualities that encouraged them to purchase property in a historic district, a wide range of architectural features were mentioned. One stated, “It’s that porch, and going in that front door and none of that wood has been changed. Well, it just stole my heart!” Another commented,

> There's an elegance; the older homes just have an elegance about them that the new homes don't have…. And the crown molding that's in there, yes, you can buy crown molding, but you can't buy crown molding that's like what's in these houses.

One participant gave an extensive list of the numerous architectural features that she valued in her home:

> The wood floors, the copper hardware, the transom windows, there is stained glass in there, the claw foot tub…the 11 foot ceilings. You can't get that in a modern house; I love the tall ceilings. I guess all the architecture and the details are what I really like.

Although many spoke about generic architectural features such as crown molding and wood floors that appealed to them, homes that illustrated specific architectural styles were also much appreciated for their architectural purity, and this contributed to the decision to purchase. One participant commented on the features that drew her to this particular home:

> You walk in the front door, it's the original door, it's the original Art and Crafts porch light. The door's four feet wide and has the original lock on it—we can't find keys for it anymore which is kind of difficult—and you walk in and the quarter-sawn fumed oak trim and wainscoting is still in place. It looks like something out of a Stickley catalog, and I was in love with the house before I had stepped four steps through the door…the architectural purity of it and the fact that

> it had remained so unaltered for so many years was, to my mind, an incredible find. It was my house before I walked out of it.

Perhaps unique to the population of historic building owners, some highly desired features mentioned by several focus group participants did not involve aesthetics at all; in fact, they might be thought of as flaws in newer homes: “I like that the doors open and close on their own, and the noises the house makes; it creaks.”

Sense of community.

Both of the themes just mentioned help contribute to one final element that emerged and provided insight into why people choose to purchase property in a historic district—a powerful sense of community. Sometimes this was described in terms of what the district was *not:* “You pull into the suburbs, open your garage door, park your car, close the garage door and walk into your house…I don’t think we have that feel down here [in the historic district]—being isolated from each other.” However, most of the participants mentioned the connection between other property owners in a way that illustrated their perception of a sense of community. They made comments such as, “You walk out your front door and walk half a block…and usually you’re waving at nearly everybody that you know,” “I’ve had people stop at my door and ask how I did [something] on my front porch or what the paint color is, just because they walk by there every night and finally stopped to ask,” and “Everyone is real good about watching when I’m gone. Or if I get called out in the middle of the night for something, they’re watching out for me.” In one community several participants mentioned a new program to form neighborhood associations as an effort to “make a community instead of isolated houses.”

Ultimately, the statements described the connections between people in the community and the notice taken of others as an important part of why they choose to live and work within a specific area; in most focus groups participants mentioned the address of their property, and invariably another participant would exclaim, “I know that house; oh, I love that house!” One participant commented, “I didn’t know who these people [other participants] were, but I watched what happened to that house, and I went in that house when it was for sale, and I’ve just loved watching everything that’s happened.” Another stated,

> I think people want to get back to the way things used to be and know their neighbors…I think there’s just a more concerted effort on getting to know your neighbors, and, as an association, doing good things for your community.

In non-historic communities, this closeness and “oversight” provided by other community members might feel oppressive, but based on comments by the focus group participants it is viewed as a positive aspect of these areas.

Synthesis of the participant responses pertaining to the first research question resulted in three findings that comprise part of a total of seven key findings for this study. Finding 1 is that participants purchased property in a historic district for rental property or for high return when selling. Finding 2 is that participants purchased property in a historic district as a result of place attachment for their community and for Oklahoma. Finding 3 is that the aesthetic value of the architectural features of the homes and buildings in the historic district played a key role in motivating participants to purchase property. These will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

How do these reasons differ if the property is a home or business?

Focus group participants included owners of both residential and commercial property; but, is there a meaningful difference in the reasons for ownership based on the type of property? The responses from all focus groups were divided to group together those districts that are primarily residential in nature and those that are primarily commercial, and then evaluated to determine which of the themes were discussed in meaningful percentages with a frequency level higher than 80% (see Tables 7 and 8).

Residential districts.

For the districts primarily residential in nature, leading themes mentioned in high numbers in the focus groups were *Financial Investment* (100%), *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features* (92%), *Convenient Location* (92%), and *Place Attachment* (92%). Comments attributable to these themes were all discussed in the previous section, along with those representing a *Sense of Community*, which was evident in 83% of the focus group discussions held in residential historic districts. However, important new themes emerged in these districts that were not seen in significant amounts in the aggregate; these were *Consistency of Neighborhood* and *Historic Character*, both discussed in 83% of the residential districts. As seen earlier in this chapter, *Consistency of Neighborhood* is the “perception that the historic district will be resistant to extreme changes over time, including the risk of infill,” and *Historic Character* is defined as “architectural and cultural features of historic properties.”

Consistency of neighborhood.

Because the tangible and intangible attributes of historic character are so important to property owners, maintaining those features are critical in contributing to a sense that the area will remain consistent in appearance over time. This theme was expressed in both positive and negative terms by residential property owners, but when discussing reasons for purchasing property in a historic district, the reduced likelihood of substantial changes occurring was considered a benefit.

Although sometimes challenging to adhere to, participants understood that the presence of preservation zoning overlays or other jurisdictional restrictions on changes made within the district protected their property value; while the constraints may prevent them from making certain changes, the constraints also prevent their neighbors from making changes. As a result, many participants interpreted this as “protection;” one stated, “You are protected from people next door making things look bad. You buy because you like the historic home…and you want to keep that around you so it’s nice to have that protection.” While a neighbor who is noncompliant with restrictions on exterior appearances can impact a property owner on a daily basis, having a new business or other type of building encroach on the district can be equally disturbing. That this is less likely to occur within a historic district provides residents with more security that their district will maintain its integrity over time; in the words of one participant, “You’re not going to have a Wal-Mart just going to come in there… you have the responsibility to help keep it up but this is your neighborhood and it’s going to stay the same.”

In the Guthrie Historic District, the City of Guthrie has become an active participant in assuring that the consistency of the district is maintained. It has developed a program to identify homes that are too decrepit to rehabilitate and pay for demolition of the residence. Although it would be preferable to have the owner take care of the property over time, this is not always possible, particularly for elderly home owners who lack the financial or trade resources to make repairs to maintain the home. In these cases, after the owner has been given the opportunity to either take steps to rehabilitate or demolish the home themselves and has waived that right, the City of Guthrie maintains funding to demolish a few homes per year. This helps insure that neighborhoods preserve the historic integrity and stay secure, and at least provides the owners with a clean lot that may be easier to sell or rebuild.

Historic character.

A common phrase uttered by many during the focus groups was that the buildings "just have so much character!" The term "character" was interpreted in different ways across the focus groups. Some participants referred to historic character in terms of architectural features, while others discussed the phrase in relation to cultural elements that were still evident in the community. When speaking of the architectural features that produce a sense of historic character, one participant commented,

> There are places in Guthrie where the houses are so close that I don't know how they could possibly paint the wall by standing between it and the next [house.] But that's part of the charm – the architecture, the [mix of] big lots, small lots.

Other participants showed evidence of their present preference for historic homes having been influenced by their past exposure; many discussed growing up in historic homes and preferring those to newer construction. One participant stated,

> I grew up in an antique home. It was built in 1904, and just gorgeous the way that place was built. Big wood columns inside the house all over the place; it was curly maple, just beautiful stuff…but there's just a totally different atmosphere living in that kind of home.

Another participant commented,

> A major reason we sought out a historical home is I lived in one as a kid and I loved the character. Having that personal history of living in an older home as a child predisposed/enabled me to be open to even consider purchasing an older home.

One participant also felt very strongly about the intrinsic benefits of living in a home with historic character:

> If you want low maintenance, you need to move to Owasso in a new house with beige carpet. But if you want creaks…to me it's just the movement of the house, it's just that character. There is just something about living in an old house….In the new homes you don't get the design; it's like living in a hotel room, there's no character to it.

One participant clearly understood the way in which character is developed—over time:

> Well, if you take a new subdivision, all the houses look the same, but after ten years, twenty years, thirty years they begin to develop character. And we're talking about houses that have been there for a hundred years, or seventy five. So they've each developed a character as they change hands, sometimes the character changes…because some people care more than others.

Although architectural features are often the most noticeable to those first viewing a historic district and considering purchasing a home within its boundaries, they are not the only elements that contribute to the historic character of the district. The deeper cultural experience may only be understood after time spent living in the district, but it is no less important to the development of an overall impression of historic character, and no less valued by property owners, in spite of its intangible nature. The importance of the unquantifiable nature of historic character was expressed simply by one participant, "We're a bedroom community; all we have to offer is our history."

Commercial districts.

Just as some of the meaningful reasons for purchasing property in a residential district were shared with those of the aggregate, a similar situation occurred with focus groups from commercial districts. Just as in the overall responses for all focus groups together, the themes of *Financial Investment* and *Place Attachment* were prominently featured in discussions with commercial property owners, with comments related to these themes reported in 100% of all commercial districts. Also frequently mentioned were phrases that were attributable to the themes of *Convenient Location* and a *Sense of Community*, which were mentioned in 83% of the focus groups held in commercial districts. These themes were previously discussed in depth in findings related to the first research question of why people choose to own property in an Oklahoma historic district. These themes were also present in the discussion above that identified those themes important to residential property owners. However, commercial property owners differed from residential owners in three distinct areas; for these owners, new themes that emerged in meaningful percentages were a sense of *Stewardship*—mentioned in 100% of the commercial district focus groups and *Availability of Construction Resources* and *Sense of History*, both present in 83% of the discussions held in commercial districts. Based on participant responses, the theme of *Availability of Construction Resources* was applicable only in relation to the third research question regarding the impact of factors, and will be discussed in the section devoted to that topic. As seen earlier in this chapter, *Stewardship* was defined as the "sense of duty to care for resources so they are available for future generations," and a *Sense of History* was defined as the "perception that elements from the past are a contributing part of contemporary life."

Stewardship.

It is evident that owners of all types of historic property are interested in maintaining Oklahoma's historic resources for the future simply because they have actually made the effort to acquire property. However, it is meaningful that the theme of *Stewardship* was documented in every one of the focus groups held within commercial historic districts, compared with only 67% of the residential districts. What is it about this environment that leads to such a sense of duty to carry these properties forward for future generations? Based on comments by participants, the efforts to be responsible stewards for Oklahoma's historic districts simply seem to be part of their daily life; because they value the building, they take rehabilitation or maintenance as a matter of course.

In some cases, it was obvious from the discussion that the participants purposefully made an effort to insure that the properties were maintained for future use. For example, one participant stated, "It's been important to me to try to go ahead and maintain the building, and to know something about the history of the buildings, and visit with people who come into town and ask about the different buildings." Because of his concern for carrying the history of the community forward, he engaged in activities that added to his knowledge while also making an effort to share that knowledge with others.

For others, the decision to save a property resulted from a direct threat:

> We acquired this building in 1997 because the city was going to demolish it, and we managed to step in and purchase it….We own four buildings in the historic district…we didn't want to own these; just didn't want them torn down.

While many may not have had the financial resources or the interest in purchasing property simply to prevent demolition, this property owner was willing to purchase multiple properties in order to protect them. Because the commercial districts are often the historic central business district of a small community, these owners understand that each building plays a vital role in the life of the residents there, and they strive to save as many as possible.

Sense of history.

Although many of the businesses operating within a commercial historic district are fulfilling a contemporary need, the property owners have an ever-present sense of taking their place in the history of the community. Many focus group participants commented on being interested in the history of the district or the larger city in which it is located. While the historic appearance of the properties undoubtedly plays a role in creating a sense of history among property owners, their comments point more to an acknowledgement of the passage of time than aesthetics. One participant expressed, “It’s part of my history growing up in Pauls Valley, and walking the streets; the familiarity of it all….I’m still living in the town that I was born in…the connection for me personally is just very strong.” Another commented:

> Personally I’ve restored older homes in smaller communities. I love that stuff but what I really love doing is reading abstracts because it tells the whole story of who built it, how they were given the land, what they paid for it; it’s the written historic of this piece of property.

Some acknowledged the contributions of others in the community as part of the sense of history they feel; one property owner told a story of rehabilitating the location for a historic automobile dealer, and learning information about the building from a former employee at the dealership:

> We couldn’t find a historic Packard sign of the scale that we wanted, so we just had one made. I get a call from this guy…and he says “’Hey, I wanted to tell you that that Packard sign looks great but…’” and he started telling me what the

original Packard sign looked like….it evokes a lot of emotion because people remember.

Although the decorative aspects of the aesthetic features may initially attract potential property owners, based on participant comments it seems to be the rich sense of taking their place in the history of the district or community that is a powerful incentive for making the purchase.

Synthesis of the participant responses pertaining to this second research question resulted in two additional findings that contribute to the total of seven key findings for this study. Finding 4 is that the historic character evidenced in both architectural features and culture of the community was an incentive for the purchaser of property in a residential historic district. Finding 5 is that being part of a community's history was an important factor in the incentive to purchase property in a commercial historic district. These additional findings will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

What factors have an impact on ownership of this type of property?

The discussion above provided evidence of possible reasons why people purchase property in an Oklahoma historic district based on focus group participant comments, and then went on to consider those reasons in light of whether the district was primarily residential or commercial in nature. The third research question for this study seeks information on the possible factors that impact ownership once the sale is completed. Based on the context of participant responses and seen in Table 9, three themes provided information that helps answer this question; they were *Financial Investment* (100%), *Availability of Construction Resources* (67%), and *Difficulty Working with Preservation*

System (56%). Of these, *Financial Investment* was defined and discussed earlier as a reason why people may choose to purchase property in a historic district; it is discussed again here to report comments made by participants regarding the negative impact of this theme on their ownership of property in a historic district. Referring back to definitions given earlier in this chapter, *Availability of Construction Resources* is defined as the "presence or lack of availability of construction personnel or materials appropriate for rehabilitations," and *Difficulty Working with Preservation System* is defined as "confusion about meeting requirements of appropriate preservation oversight body."

Financial investment.

Participants in focus groups in every district reported issues that threatened a positive financial outlook. Most difficulties are unavoidable and simply the result of the age of the property; for those trying to rehabilitate a home or building, there is no way to tell what might lie beneath the surface until the surface is removed and the situation revealed that will bring a new challenge—and invariably a delay—in the process. One participant explained:

> I'm an architect and [other participant] is a client, and I'm sure he's tired of hearing the term 'unforeseen conditions' but that's our generic term for when you tear into something and it's like, 'Oh, I didn't expect to find that.'

For many, owning a historic building means they also own historic systems that must be replaced to meet current building codes or just the needs of current owners. Rewiring a home to adapt from a knob and tube electrical system, adding central heating and air conditioning, or updating plumbing pipes and fixtures can be a significant investment. Similarly, replacing the roof is often inevitable unless it was done by a previous owner in the somewhat recent past. Although critical, these unseen repairs can eat into any potential profit the property owner might have expected when purchasing the home. One participant ruefully explained, “There are things that you always have to do, and this was our first home; it was a rude awakening to home ownership, because we had no clue what kind of expenses there were in a home.”

Many owners proclaimed owning a historic property a “labor of love” and advised that property owners “be committed” and look for the future benefit and enjoyment in the midst of rehabilitations. One participant phrased it, “I would say it had better be a passion and not a passing fancy, because without the passion it would just be a lot of work instead of a lot of play.” However, another participant urged caution in updating historic property:

> It needs more friends of those kinds of properties and not just people who buy an older home because they think they can buy it cheaper and then try to make it a new house. An old house is not meant to be a new house, and if you go in and strip all the bones and the life out of it, you’ve lost it.

The constant need for maintenance was also frequently mentioned as financial burden; this, along with major repairs, contributed to a perception by many owners that they would not be able to recover everything they had spent on the property when they decided to sell. One participant seemed resigned to the thought that she would not make a profit when she chose to sell her property; although first expressing how much she loved the building and the process of rehabilitating it for her current use, she said “It was not the best financial investment we've ever made; it's kind of like a boat. You just keep pouring money into it and there's always something else that needs to be done." Another commented,

> I didn't do it for the resale value; I will have to sell it eventually. But I didn't do it thinking I'll get some money out of it; I did it because this is what I wanted my house to be like.

Although there may be funds available for rehabilitating revenue-producing properties through the tax credit program to help offset expenses, for most property owners additional funds are not available for repairs and routine maintenance and these must be paid for from their own resources.

Availability of construction resources.

A contributing factor to the expensive nature of most repairs or rehabilitations is the lack of availability of construction personnel trained in historic building techniques or materials appropriate for rehabilitations. Many participants commented on the lack of skilled tradespeople who are familiar with historic buildings and understand how to work around the idiosyncrasies of historic construction techniques. They also observed that those who are available are often somewhat "historic" themselves and are literally taking their knowledge with them to the grave. Although there are younger people who know how and are willing to work on older buildings and homes, they are often booked up months in advance and have to be found through word of mouth; due to the high demand, they rarely have to advertise to find new customers.

Unfortunately, there are also tradespeople who may be familiar with working on historic buildings but who do not really want to; as a result, they may replace historic materials with current alternatives that don't fit with the surrounding material or price their services excessively high to discourage potential clients. More than one participant mentioned arranging with a company for work to be done, only to see the company vehicle slowly drive by the home—and then keep driving because they did not want to work on an older building. One participant commented, "They charge more to go up there [on the roof]; it's more dangerous, it takes them more time." Another stated, "It's always going to be more expensive….You have to know it's going to be harder to get under the house to work on it; it's going to be harder to get through the wall to work on it."

As a result of the difficulty in finding trained construction personnel willing to work on historic buildings, many owners reported developing skills themselves. This was done in part to save money; for some the exorbitant fees proposed by tradespeople are impossible to afford. For others, it was a matter of being unable to find trained personnel in the area and having to learn how to do the repairs themselves. One participant commented, "If you own an old home, you learn very quickly how to paint and paper, just in self-defense."

Difficulty working with preservation system.

Although the difficulties faced by historic property owners in repairing or maintaining their building or home are significant, the work often takes place only after being approved by an organization with jurisdictional oversight of zoning or codes related to the preservation of the district. This was frequently mentioned in focus groups, and in some cases represented a significant impact on their ownership of the property; in some cases this impact was purely financial, and in others it produced a more emotional respponse. However, it was evident in all the discussions that there is a great deal of confusion about what is required and where property owners must go to find information or approval for the desired maintenance or rehabilitation of their property.

Based on the discussion topics within focus groups, many participants want to be compliant with preservation requirements, but may not know where to go to learn about architectural standards or how to get permits for necessary repairs. Others reported being required to meet conflicting standards between the city in which the district is located and the preservation body. For example, in a conflict between the agency insuring the home and the historic preservation oversight committee, one participant recalled:

> The insurance company…said, 'You either change the windows out on that garage, and you get rid of those stairs that are falling down…or we won't cover this property.' And I said, 'If I change those windows out, then not even my garage apartment will be contributing.' And they said, 'Well, make a choice; you could have a fire here.'

In most cases, the focus group participants reported understanding the need for code compliance in order to maintain the integrity of the historic district; however, they also reported the difficulty in trying to be compliant and the impact on their resources, both of time and money. They specifically mentioned the necessity of going before a board to have selections approved, the number of inspections required in order to acquire a Certificate of Appropriateness for repairs, and the resulting time away from work to meet those performing the inspections, as well as the expenses involved in making repairs according to approved techniques and with appropriate materials. In some cases, participants mentioned the need for more uniform enforcement of those codes already in place so that the integrity of the district could be more consistently maintained.

In one extreme case, the necessity of meeting preservation zoning requirements prevented one participant from being a foster parent due to a restriction that prohibited the addition of screens on her windows on the second level of her home. As a result, she was no longer allowed to house foster children in her home because of a perceived lack of safety. Having purchased the home at auction, she was not informed that it was located within a registered historic district, and was therefore unaware of the necessary codes she must meet. She commented, “I didn’t know there was a rule book…I just knew I was buying my dream home with the white picket fence that I [now] can’t have.”

Synthesis of the above discussion for the third research question leads to the final two findings that complete the total of seven key findings for this study. Finding 6 is that the demands of constant maintenance and the high cost of building materials with uncertainty of a return on investment had a negative impact on participants’ financial investment. Finding 7 is that participants had difficulty working within the preservation system due to limitations on aesthetic choices and requirements for specific repair techniques and/or materials. The seven findings mentioned at the end of the discussion for each research question will be addressed in depth in the following chapter.

Throughout the 18 focus group discussions held within the selected historic districts, the themes that emerged from participant responses provided answers to the research questions that served as a guide for this study. By engaging in personal interactions with the property owners in the historic districts of Oklahoma, the researcher began to understand their unique perspectives and to gain insight into the experiences of those owners and the meaning it creates for them. The next chapter discusses analysis of the results with respect to prevailing literature as well as experiences in the specific communities to interpret the experience of owning property in Oklahoma historic districts.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the results described in detail in the previous chapter. It is organized by research question, with specific findings within each question that help provide further answers. These findings are synthesized from the discussion of study results seen in the previous chapter; by re-examining participant responses and the resulting themes that emerged from the data, results were distilled into the seven key findings mentioned at the end of each research question and presented here. Table 10 provides a graphical representation of those findings attributable to individual research questions. These findings represent the most

Table 10

Application of Study Findings to Research Questions

Finding	Res. ques. 1	Res. ques. 2	Res. ques. 3
1: Potential Return on Investment	●		
2: Place Attachment to Community and State	●		
3: Appreciation of Architectural Features	●		
4: Appreciation of Historic Character		●	
5: Participation in a Community's History		●	
6: Impact of Maintenance and Repair			●
7: Difficulties with the Preservation System			●

important of the themes determined to be meaningful for the participants based on frequency of mention in the transcripts and the amount of discussion dedicated to specific topics. A secondary layer of analysis was performed by connecting the findings to existing literature, and comparing and contrasting these with relevant issues. This chapter will conclude with a summary of interpretations of the findings.

As discussed in previous chapters, the purpose of this study was to gather information from property owners in historic districts across the state of Oklahoma about the experience of owning this type of property. Knowing why people choose to own historic property is vital to insuring that these resources remain viable. It is important for the preservation community and other related industries to be aware of the influences behind these decisions and the resulting impacts on ownership; only through knowledge and understanding can they strive to provide appropriate education, resources, and support to current property owners and encourage others to become stakeholders in the common goal of maintaining Oklahoma's historic resources.

Why Do People Own Property in a Historic District in Oklahoma?

As seen in the previous chapter, when exploring evidence to answer this first research question, three themes emerged across all but one of the focus group discussions —those of *Financial Investment, Place Attachment,* and *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features*. Although the remaining themes categorized under the first research question were seen in an equal or greater percentage of focus group discussions [i.e. *Convenient Location* and *Sense of Community*], further exploration of the coded responses for each of the themes underscored a higher level of discussion dedicated to *Aesthetic Value of*

Architectural Features over the remaining two. By analyzing focus group transcripts and synthesizing participant responses, the themes of *Financial Investment*, *Place Attachment*, and *Aesthetic Value of Architectural Features* provide the basis for the first three of the seven important findings from the data.

Finding 1: Participants purchased property in a historic district for rental property or for a high return when selling. There is extensive literature that describes the likelihood of higher property values found in historic districts and even neighborhoods surrounding those districts (Asabere & Huffman, 1994; Coulson & Leichenko, 2001; Coulson & Leichenko, 2004; Leichenko, Coulson, & Listokin, 2001; Zahirovic-Herbert & Chatterjee, 2011), and this was evident in the discussions of several focus groups. Some portion of this increase in property value is likely the natural result of the transformation of the condition of the property as it is begins to be maintained. These properties are *old*; in some cases they may have been vacant for many years prior to purchase by their current owners. The poor condition of the property when purchased is destined to improve with even the smallest degree of rehabilitation, resulting in an increase in property value. More than one focus group participant mentioned purchasing a property for "back taxes;" this low initial cost virtually guarantees that the property value will increase.

The potential for a high return on investment is entirely dependent on the initial condition and the ability of the owner to rehabilitate the property and make it livable again. It would seem that the lure of potential renters combined with the possibility of investment tax credits for certified rehabilitations of income-producing properties would be appealing to property owners as a way to recoup at least a portion of their expenses, but of those who participated in this study, not one had taken advantage of the program. A few reported investigating the requirements to apply for tax credits, but mentioned being quickly overwhelmed and giving up on the process.

Some owners seemed to understand that although the potential for a high return on their initial investment was there, it would not materialize quickly—and they were willing to wait. One participant stated,

> I think in the long-term these properties are going to stand the test of time; I mean they already have. And we put a little extra money in them because we're going to keep them, and I think we'll be rewarded in the long term.

Conversely, one participant bemoaned the fact that they had to move from their home much sooner than expected, and would lose close to $50,000 due to extensive repairs and maintenance costs that could not be recovered when selling their home. However, many participants termed the process of owning property in a historic district a "labor of love;" even though it might be difficult and expensive, they were still willing to undertake the process of rehabilitation in the hopes of eventually recovering their investment.

In some cases, the purchase of a property within a historic district for financial investment was intentional, while in others it was just a coincidence. One property owner reported the tendency of investors in her residential district to "flip" houses and then charge high rents for the rehabilitated properties; when asked why investors might want to purchase these particular homes, she replied, "Because it's a historic neighborhood, and it's supposed to be great because it's close to downtown." In some communities, properties in the historic district are the only ones available. This was particularly true in rural commercial areas that comprise the historic district; if someone wanted to rent or purchase property for their business, it had to be in the historic district. This captive market essentially made the location within a historic district coincidental.

One factor that may lead investors to purchase property in a historic district is the large size of some properties. Although they may purchase the property for personal use, the abundance of space may result in an unused upper floor or empty basement that may be rented to recover expenses or for extra revenue. One participant commented that, “The primary utilization of the downstairs space…was for my law office….I looked at it all, and it was the upstairs apartment that made the overall renovation economically feasible, as far as I was concerned.” Another stated, “I just think that if I were looking at a building downtown, I would strongly look at a building that had an upstairs that I could convert to a rental space.” A property owner in a residential district also discussed the possibility of renting out the bottom floor of her home: “It has an outside door …you could go straight to the basement…since it has a kitchen and there’s room for sleeping quarters and closets, you could actually have income property there.”

Unfortunately, an unwelcome side effect of increased property value is a corresponding increase in property taxes. Several commercial property owners described the jump in taxes they had experienced since purchasing the property: “They keep soaring.” This rise in property taxes was mentioned in Zahirovic-Herbert & Chatterjee (2012) and Leichenko, Couson, & Listokin (2001) as a negative result of historic district designation; these studies also discussed the tendency of higher property values to lead to the displacement of those tenants at lower socio-economic levels, but this was not mentioned in any of the focus groups for this study.

Finding 2: Participants purchased property in a historic district as a result of place attachment for their community and for Oklahoma. "I don't want to move outside Guthrie. Even if I got a job in Tulsa…I'd drive." This statement made by a focus group participant is just one example of the strong degree of place attachment owners feel for their property in the historic districts selected for this study. This particular participant described his involvement with church and several community organizations while discussing his feeling of being "rooted;" this corresponds with the assertion made by Saar and Palang (2009) that being involved with "traditional activities" leads to a deeper bond between resident and place. They go on to discuss the effect of relationships with other people in a place and the contribution these make to the level of meaning experienced. One participant felt that being in a place where everyone knew you was a benefit of owning property in her particular historic district, and informed her children, "You're not going to get away with anything, everybody knows you." This was just one example of comments made by participants that expressed their enjoyment of being around people who knew them from past experience and whom they may have remembered from their childhood.

In a similar vein, several participants discussed the importance of being in a community they felt was a good place in which to raise their children. Although they may have moved away at some point, they wanted to return to their community so they could provide their children with the benefits they had growing up there. One participant stated, "My husband and I both were born and raised here…we spent five years in Tulsa…and we wanted to come home and raise our family here." Even though she had lived in a different city for several years, she still referred to this community as home, indicating the degree of attachment she felt for her childhood environment. This corresponds with Trentelman (2009) and her discussion of the connection between residents and their communities; she stated that this attachment was “a measure of sentiment” and a gauge of the level of “rootedness” felt by residents. Trentelman also used the term “place dependence” as a way to compare one place to another with the outcome that “no other place will do as well as this one” (p. 200). Based on comments by several participants, this was a common perception particularly with regard to raising a family—no matter where they may have moved following high school or college, they made the decision to return to their community in order to provide an upbringing similar to one they received, something they seemed to value.

This emphasis on family did not apply only to raising children; more than one participant mentioned returning to the community in order to care for an ailing parent or to be near extended family. While the first case might not necessarily imply an attachment to the community, the decision to remain in the district—even though there may no longer be a need to do so—certainly does. For others, when asked why they initially looked to purchase property in the particular area in which they currently were owners, the presence of family in the community was often given as a primary reason.

Maintaining contact with extended family members—specifically “genealogical linkage through history or family lineage” —was mentioned in Saar and Palang (2009, p. 14) as one of several ways in which people and place can become connected. This was evident in comments made by some participants as they described their family history, particularly in connection with the history of Oklahoma and the early years of settlement. These comments seemed to indicate a great sense of pride in the accomplishments of ancestors, further enhancing the attachment they felt, not only to the community, but to the state. One participant said, “My grandfather was US Deputy Marshall in Indian Territory…so my family goes all the way back to when the Indians acquired the land, and there’s a sense of connectedness that I have.” Another commented, “I’m Oklahoma…my great-grandfather made the [Land] Run, my parents moved here, my dad’s family lived here, there’s an addition that is named after them… so this was home.” This attachment to Oklahoma and a specific community, and the importance of maintaining contact with family, was strong enough to repeatedly draw people back from other locations, sometimes even after many years.

The continuity valued by focus group participants as they discussed their connection to family was echoed in their descriptions of the historic district in which they own property. Appreciation of the continuity of their community seemed to indicate that the historic district itself provided a sense of stability in an often chaotic world. Although conditions placed on historic districts may be restrictive, property owners seemed to value the consistency that this produced in the district, not only in terms of aesthetics but also in the ability to maintain the atmosphere of the area. As stated in Brown, Perkins, & Brown (2003), “residential attachments promote and provide stability, familiarity, and security” (p. 259). One participant described his love of the “small town atmosphere” present in his district and his efforts to maintain the “integrity of the neighborhood” to protect that atmosphere, not to protect his financial investment but to maintain the feeling of the area that he remembered from growing up there.

Finding 3: The aesthetic value of the architectural features of the homes and buildings in the historic district played a key role in motivating participants to purchase *property.* For those considering the purchase of historic property in the districts investigated in this study, the abundance of detailed architectural features was often the first enticement to explore the property further. Referred to as “visual richness” in Herzog & Gale (1996), the purely aesthetic value of egg-and-dart trim or intricate crown molding is very appealing to those who may be more accustomed to the streamlined, uniform architecture of today that is typically lacking in detail of any kind. This was expressed by participants in varying terms, but they invariably gave precise details about what it was they found appealing; rather than simply saying the property was beautiful, they described the “original stenciled ceilings,” “wrap-around porch,” or “quarter-sawn fumed oak trim” that often was the specific detail that sold them on the property. This emphasis on architectural features corresponds with a suggestion made by Nasar (1994) to consider aesthetics as a criterion in design evaluations for urban areas that seek to avoid uniformity in building exteriors with the aim to produce a pleasurable and interesting street level experience. The focus group participants’ appreciation of the aesthetic value of the property in their historic districts also verifies the results of a study performed by Nyapaune and Timothy (2010, p. 234) where residents ranked the importance of architectural quality and “beauty of the building” just slightly below “historic/cultural importance” when determining which historic buildings should be preserved.

One aspect that helps set historic properties apart is their relative rarity. In communities such as Guthrie, this is not the case; in fact, more recent architecture is certainly in the minority there. However, in most communities, properties located within the historic district are *different*—both in style and age—and this appeals to property owners in these areas. One participant felt these properties “evoke an emotional reaction” and stated simply, “Having something old and rare makes people happy.” Many participants also mentioned the diversity of architectural styles seen in the historic district, and appreciated the variety when compared to other, non-historic properties that make up the majority of a community’s building stock. One participant stated, “Guthrie is, in my opinion, somewhat of a laboratory of architectural styles…and I think that makes the houses much more interesting.” Another commented, “I like the uniqueness of something that is not a cookie-cutter type of neighborhood.” This appreciation of the unique aesthetic nature of these properties confirmed the results discussed in Levi (2005) that indicated that older buildings with complex architectural styles and ornament were preferred to more minimal architecture in 9 of 15 studies.

Although valued by the focus group participants, the architectural features of their homes or buildings were not appreciated strictly for their aesthetic appeal; several participants also commented on the rarity today of the skill level required to produce the intricate detail seen on the properties: “There is just a huge joy in wavy glass and big porches and things you just can’t replicate. You cannot reproduce what a lot of these neighborhoods have in them.” The participant went on to say, “It’s from an economic standpoint…you couldn’t build mahogany dining rooms…the way you can acquire [them].” The value of someone skilled in working on historic properties is evident in the time property owners are willing to wait to have a knowledgeable tradesperson attend to their home or business. One participant stated that the man who frequently works on her home was committed to projects several months in advance, while another paid someone in advance to reroof her home, even though it was eight months before he actually began the project. Although inconvenient to wait, these property owners were more than willing to do so in order to have someone work on their home that was sensitive to preserving the intricate details in existence and have the skill to reproduce or repair architectural features. Many participants had stories about workmen ranging from those who never appeared to those who drove by the building and never stopped once they saw the property was historic, as well as half-completed projects left by those who were not skilled enough or interested in the time and attention these properties demand. One succinctly stated, “It’s really hard to find reliable, trustworthy work.”

How Do These Reasons Differ if the Property is a Home or Business?

Chapter IV extensively discussed the themes that emerged from focus groups to provide answers for this second research question. These themes were further differentiated into those that most applied to residential or commercial districts. For those focus group participants owning property in districts primarily residential in nature, features that created an atmosphere promoting *Consistency of Neighborhood* and *Historic Character* were seen to be meaningful reasons for purchasing the property. However, further exploration of the coded responses for each theme underscored a higher level of discussion dedicated to *Historic Character*, which led to the fourth finding to be discussed below. For those participants owning property in a district primarily commercial in nature, results reported in Chapter IV indicated that feelings of *Stewardship* and a *Sense of History* emerged as incentives to purchase their property. Following continued analysis of transcripts and participants’ coded responses, it was evident that although a *Sense of History* was discussed much more prevalently than *Stewardship*, both themes were important to commercial property owners, and therefore both were integrated into the fifth finding derived from the data attributable to this research question.

Finding 4: The historic character evidenced in both architectural features and the culture of the community was an incentive for a purchaser of property in a residential historic district. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the focus group participants often mentioned the draw of “character” when discussing their perception of the positive aspects of owning property in a historic district. Interestingly, their determination of character was not developed solely from architectural features, but also included cultural aspects of the community as well. Many participants discussed their enjoyment of finding old newspapers in the walls of their building or coins placed under window sills to document the end of construction as evidence of the habits of past residents; there were also several stories of the exploits of previous community members, including one ghost story. The participants appeared to relish the retelling of these stories for a new listener (the researcher), but it was obvious that these artifacts belonging to real people who lived in their community added to the richness of their experience. This corresponds with the results of a study reported in Nyaupane and Timothy (2010) that indicated Americans felt very connected to their past as shown by survey results that produced a mean level of interest of 7.3 on a scale from one to ten.

Although the cultural history of their community appeared to be very meaningful to the current property owners, this was unlikely to have been immediately apparent prior to purchasing the property unless they had already spent time in the district or the larger community. The architectural features that serve as symbols of historical trends and the result of a long life would be the elements most readily observable, and these were often the first to be mentioned when discussing the homes. Features such as doors opening and closing on their own, creaking floors, intricate molding, and front doors that no longer had keys were often given as examples of historic character the owners so admired. These fit with descriptions given in Charles (1986) of the tangible attributes representing "historic character" that include building materials, high levels of workmanship, and interior spaces. He goes on to explain that these features, if removed or altered, would damage the perception of historic character for a building. This conclusion was echoed by one participant describing the manner in which some contemporary owners desire to integrate more contemporary features into historic homes: "I know the young folks that buy have very different taste…we say 'going in and tearing out the kitchens; the authenticity…you're killing the house.'" This corresponds with comments made by Milligan (2007) describing the tendency of preservationists to consider historic buildings as "part of the authentic fabric of neighborhoods and cities: to damage them is to damage a piece of the whole" (p. 107).

While several participants openly conveyed their appreciation of the features that engender historic character in residential historic districts, others frankly scoffed at attempts to fabricate this quality in newer construction. This contradicted conclusions made by Levi (2005) describing the results of a survey seeking the perceptions of people toward "fake" historic architecture; the results of this study indicated that "historic-looking" buildings were seen as "attractive complements" to authentically historic buildings. However, in this study, participants felt differently: "You can't reproduce [character]….People try to mimic history and you just can't do it."

Finding 5: Being part of a community's history was an important incentive to purchase property in a commercial historic district. Having property in a commercial historic district produced a great sense of pride in the owner, as reported by several focus group participants. This sense of pride seemed to come not from simply being a property owner, but from owning this *particular* type of property. As expressed by one participant, "For a community, it is very prestigious to have a National Register district." Because of this prestige, property in a commercial historic district may be highly desirable and therefore difficult to come by, which in turn may imply inclusion in a higher socio-economic level that contributes to an elevated sense of identity for some property owners. This "cachet" of historic designation, and the resulting increase in the popularity of property was also found in Coulson and Leichenko (2004). As discussed earlier, many property owners have a high level of attachment to their communities; becoming part of the legacy of the central business district is very meaningful, while also setting these owners apart from other community members. Capitalizing on the appeal of improving their perception of themselves, the potential for recognition as a member of a somewhat exclusive group may serve as a powerful incentive to purchase property in a commercial historic district.

Those who own property in a commercial historic district also have the benefit of being more visible to the community than those who own property in a residential district; much of this is due simply to location. Because many of the commercial historic districts in Oklahoma comprise all or part of the central business district of a community, they are likely to be visited by more members of a community more frequently than an individual residential district which is likely to be primarily seen only by its residents.

This provides commercial property owners with greater visibility, not only through integration into the downtown streetscape, but additionally through possible exposure in local media coverage as integral members of a community's economic leadership. This increased potential for exposure may contribute to a property owner's perception of their overall place in the community, and by extension, their sense of identity. Taking a more altruistic interpretation, the increased exposure of a property in a commercial historic district also increases the number of people the owner may be able to impact through participation in a community's social, economic, and political leadership, further strengthening the community for the benefit of all. As one property owner commented, "It's been important to me to …maintain the building and to know something about the history of the buildings, and visit with the people who come into town and ask about the different buildings."

This last comment also exemplifies the sense of stewardship felt by property owners in a commercial historic district, and corresponds with comments made by Deckha (2004) regarding the feeling that the spaces one helps to preserve have particular meaning to the community and are "significant to the cityscape to which it belongs" (p. 406). For example, when asked about the reasons for purchasing their specific property in the commercial historic district, one participant commented they acquired their building because, "the city was going to demolish it, and we managed to step in a purchase it." She went on to describe how former residents who return to community are "always pleased to see that the buildings have been preserved, and we do draw people who are interested in preservation because we have a really unique downtown." Although this particular district had several vacant buildings, residents still valued their architectural heritage and were willing to purchase properties in danger of demolition so that future residents would be able to experience first-hand the history of the community represented by existing building stock. Another participant commented that, “We’re very happy that Perkins has been able to maintain some of their old buildings; we didn’t have a lot of old buildings to begin with…people are happy that we have this historic district.”

What Factors Have an Impact on Ownership of This Type of Property?

The previous findings were derived from analysis of the coded responses of the focus group participants, and provided insight into the reasons why they might choose to purchase property in a historic district in Oklahoma. However, what happens after they make the purchase? Owning historic property comes with a unique set of challenges; many participants described it as a “labor of love” and cautioned potential purchasers to examine their motives and make sure they have a passion for the property that will help carry them through the inherent difficulties of rehabilitation and maintenance. The themes attributable to the third research question and discussed at length in Chapter IV indicated areas that focus group participants described in both positive and negative terms; these were *Financial Investment, Availability of Construction Resources,* and *Difficulty Working with Preservation System.* Although *Financial Investment* was discussed at length within Finding 1, the negative aspects mentioned in discussion of that theme contributed to the development of the final two key findings derived from participant responses, along with discussion of the other two themes addressing availability of construction resources and working within the preservation system.

Finding 6: The demands of constant maintenance and the high cost of building materials with uncertainty of a return on investment had a negative impact on the property owners' financial investment. Owners of historic properties who must rehabilitate or maintain their properties are often faced with greater expenses than they might encounter with newer construction. This was described in articles by Leichenko, Coulson & Listokin (2001) and Reynolds (2006) and confirmed in comments made by several focus group participants. These expenses resulted from three factors that combined to have a negative impact on the financial investment of the property owners: rarity of materials appropriate for use in rehabilitation of historic property, rarity of skilled labor to install the materials, and the distant locations where appropriate materials can be found. Because these properties require constant maintenance to keep them functioning properly, owners are continually impacted by these factors. One participant discussed the difficulty of finding a particular type of siding for his home that needed to be replaced: "They don't mill 8" cedar siding anymore. So I had to special order it from the mill; therefore it takes a lot longer to get and the cost that is associated with that was a lot more." Another commented that, "Anytime you have to replace something, it's like a square peg in a round hole" due to differences in the standard sizes of currently available material or equipment compared to that found on historic buildings. Reynolds (2006) also reported that sometimes the materials utilized for the original construction were luxury items, both then and now, which adds to the expense of maintenance or repair, but this was not mentioned by any of the focus group participants in this study. However, they did mention several times the difficulty of finding tradespeople capable of repairing or maintaining the historic materials and equipment: "It's a real struggle when you have something come up….we really needed to have parts of our porch replaced, and hardly anyone felt like that was something they wanted to tackle."

In order to pay the high costs of building materials and skilled labor, many property owners are forced to seek supplementary financing, which can be challenging in today's economic climate. Heintzelman and Altieri (2013) reported that designation as a historic district restricts the options of the property owner to re-sell or develop the property to maximize its worth. As a result, some financial institutions may balk at providing funds for a venture that may be perceived as somewhat risky, and borrowers may need other sources of collateral than the house itself to secure the loan. Depending on the extent of the rehabilitation needed, some focus group participants reported spending tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars to make their property inhabitable. Those intending to own their property for many years felt that the investment would pay off over time; however, for those who planned to sell sooner rather than later, or who were forced to sell the property sooner than expected due to unforeseen circumstances, they had no such assurances.

In some cases, rehabilitation of a historic property in order to make it inhabitable was not really choice—a leaking roof must be repaired to prevent further damage to the interior. Unfortunately, for those who had to sell their property sooner than they had planned, they were not able to inhabit the property long enough to recoup expenses; sometimes this had a significant—and negative—effect on their financial investment. As one participant reported, "We put a lot of money into it and we will not get that back." Others were more philosophical about the high cost of repairs and maintenance, and seemed not to expect to recover their investment when they sold the property. As one participant explained, "I will have to sell it eventually, but I didn't do it [rehabilitation] thinking I'll get some money out of it. I did it because this is what I wanted my house to be like."

*Finding 7: Property owners had difficulty working with the preservation system due to limitations on aesthetic choices and requirements for specific repair techniques and/or materials***.** One factor mentioned above contributes to the difficulty reported by many focus group participants**—**that of the challenge involved in finding and purchasing appropriate buildings materials, the requirement for which is often established by state and local preservation bodies. Although these bodies exist to help protect historic resources, they may be perceived by property owners as overly restrictive and failing to consider the challenges of current owners. Maskey, Brown & Lin (2009) and Heintzelman & Altieri (2013) reported similar conclusions: in some cases, historic designation may decrease property values as a result of regulations perceived as too rigorous for property owners. While this was not stated explicitly by property owners in this study, several commented on the lack of flexibility of preservation officials in individual jurisdictions with regard to the feasibility of owners undertaking specific repairs or acquiring appropriate materials. One participant commented on the demands of her local preservation committee with regard to repairs made as a result of a roof leak; she stated, "A Certificate of Appropriateness for every single thing; they told me, 'You have to have them although your house is not contributing [to the historic integrity of the district]." While most participants stated they understood and agreed with the need for regulations to help maintain the historic integrity of the district, they also wished those in charge of preservation oversight were equally understanding of the challenges faced by property owners in trying to maintain their properties. As stated by one participant, “When you’re trying to preserve something like that, somebody’s got to give a little bit, and it can’t always be the homeowner….we’re already putting the expense in….It becomes very difficult, very tiring, and frustrating to deal with that.”

A related difficulty in working with the preservation body overseeing their district was the issue of consistency in enforcement. While one of the benefits of having restrictions on properties in the district is the requirement of compliance for *all* owners, several participants criticized the inconsistency of enforcement with their district. As one participant phrased it,

> The city has code regulations; they need to enforce them. I don’t like for it to be an adversarial situation where you have to call in and ask for something to be moved or ask someone to mow the yard.

Although it might be expected that historic designation implies a certain level of maintenance, this is not always the case; the overall quality of a district may depend on several factors, including the socio-economic level of the property owners, the percentage of properties used strictly for rental purposes, and even how many owners are actually aware they are within the boundaries of a registered historic district. If a property owner does not know they own a historic resource, they will not make an effort to maintain it according to established standards; in fact, they won’t even know there are established standards that should be followed.

Although this last point might seem far-fetched, it was unfortunately common in the districts selected for the study. As part of the institutional oversight for this study, contact information for the researcher was provided on the cover letter for the survey distributed to all property owners in the selected districts. The researcher received several phone calls from property owners stating that they did not own property in a historic district, and therefore would not be able to participate in the study; however, they would not have received a survey if they were not listed as the property owner in official records. Two reasons were commonly given for this assertion; in some cases, the callers stated that they were not told by anyone during the buying process that they were in a historic district. In others, they commented that they were specifically told by their realtor that the property was *not* in a historic district. The most likely reason for this failure by local realtors to illuminate buyers about their impending purchase of a historic resource could be the result of a lack of emphasis in real estate education on this particular aspect—they simply didn't know themselves, and therefore could not pass that information along to a potential buyer. Although a potential buyer could not help but be aware of the advanced age of the properties in the area, they may not have any knowledge of the National Register of Historic Places, and therefore would not differentiate between an *old* property and one designated as a *historic* property.

Happily, the overwhelming majority of property owners in a historic district understands the designation, and genuinely wants to own property there. However, this does not always mean that they willingly comply with all standards. In some cases, they are simply not able to afford the cost of materials that would be considered appropriate, and must find ways to satisfy preservation officials with a lower quality of building material or workmanship. On participant commented, "I've got to be able to work within my means and work within the materials that are available now…if you're going to put restrictions on me then I can't do it." Another participant felt that the number of inspections required was excessive and were difficult to schedule when she had to take off time from work to meet the officials. In other cases, property owners may resent the restrictions—particularly with regard to selections that are more aesthetic than functional—and feel that the rights of the owners should take precedence over those of the preservation oversight body. As one participant stated, "I wasn't a fan of being judged by all these people….and having to explain why I want a new roof on my house. It's old; it needs a new roof…you shouldn't have to justify making your home better." As stated in Heintzelman & Altieri (2013), registering an area as a historic district "provides a public good at the cost of restricting the activities of homeowners" (p. 546); even though most property owners understand that the price of owning a historic building will be compliance with restrictions intended to maintain the historic integrity of the area, that may not mean they will comply without resentment.

Summary of Interpretation of Findings

This chapter discussed at length the seven key findings derived from analysis of the coded responses of the focus group participants. These findings were distilled from the results discussed in Chapter IV to explore the essential experience of owning property in a historic district in Oklahoma. The key findings included (a) the purchase of property for a potentially high return when selling, (b) a high degree of place attachment to the community and the state, (c) the motivating factor of the aesthetic value of architectural features, (d) the importance of the historic character of the architecture and the larger community to those purchasing residential property, (e) the importance of contributing to a community's history to those purchasing commercial property, (f) the negative financial impact due to the high costs of appropriate building materials and continual maintenance, and, finally, (g) the difficulties property owners experienced in working within the preservation system.

The challenge of developing these key findings was to reduce the large volume of information gleaned from the individual focus group transcripts, and identify the larger patterns continued within that would describe the day-to-day lived experiences of the participants and the meaning that owning property in a historic district in Oklahoma has for them. While every attempt was made to contact all those who indicated on the initial survey their interest in participating in a focus group, the owners who actually participated in the focus groups represent a fraction of the total. Therefore, it should be noted that the findings produced from the data collected are specific to the group of 51 participants included in the study. Consistent with the qualitative nature of the study, the researcher acknowledges the subjective nature of the interpretations of the findings discussed above. As with any study, bias exists, and the researcher acknowledges the possibility of additional bias resulting from her opinion that the standards and restrictions established by the preservation community, though not always easy, are necessary and important to insuring that the historic resources of Oklahoma are properly maintained. To attempt to minimize the effect of this, throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher continually reflected on the impartiality of her interpretation and strove to use the participants' words as objectively as possible. It must be acknowledged that it is entirely possible that other participants may have responded to the focus group questions differently, and the findings discussed in this chapter are a description of how this researcher understood and translated participant comments to create some level of meaning from the material.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

The built environment in Oklahoma is not as old as that found in other regions of the country, and there is no long tradition of respecting historic resources often seen in those areas. As a result, it is all too easy for the demands of contemporary life to result in the destruction of existing historic buildings, or at a minimum lead to compromised historic integrity. However, there are those who seek out historic properties for both personal and professional reasons. The purpose of this study was to explore the reasons why people choose to own property in Oklahoma historic districts and investigate the factors that impact ownership prior to purchase. The conclusions from this study were developed from participant comments related to three research questions and are framed within seven key findings:

- Finding 1: Participants purchased property in a historic district for rental property or for a high return when selling.
- Finding 2: Participants purchased property in a historic district as a result of place attachment for their community and for Oklahoma.

- Finding 3: The aesthetic value of the architectural features of the homes and buildings in the historic district played a key role in motivating participants to purchase property.
- Finding 4: The historic character evidenced in both architectural features and the culture of the community was an incentive for a purchaser of property in a residential historic district.
- Finding 5: Being part of a community's history was an important incentive to purchase property in a commercial historic district.
- Finding 6: The demands of constant maintenance and the high cost of building materials with uncertainty of a return on investment had a negative impact on the property owners' financial investment.
- Finding 7: Property owners had difficulty working with the preservation system due to limitations on aesthetic choices and requirements for specific repair techniques and/or materials**.**

To assist the researcher in maintaining consistency throughout the various steps of analysis and synthesis and insure that all relevant issues were addressed, a detailed table was developed to compile Findings, Interpretations, Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations, and related literature; this can be seen in Appendix H. Researcher interpretations of specific key findings supported by participant responses and prevailing literature were addressed in the previous chapter. Conclusions developed for each key finding are discussed below, followed by the implications and recommendations for those groups who are stakeholders in historic districts and integral to the success of preservation in the state. Finally, recommendations for future areas of research are enumerated at the conclusion of this chapter.

Finding 1: Potential return on investment.

Many participants purchased property in a historic district to use as rental property or for the potentially high return on investment when selling. In some cases this was done strictly for investment purposes, but many times owners also lived or operated a business in property within the district *in addition to* their rental property—which indicates a larger purpose behind ownership. Historic buildings are full of challenges, and the willingness to own more than one property in a historic district indicates the potential (perceived or real) for a positive impact on their financial investment. Based on focus group participant responses, while the likelihood of a beneficial financial investment may have been the motivation for the original purchase, it was not one of the reasons why owning the property was meaningful for them. Owning this type of property was meaningful because of the owners' appreciation of the aesthetic nature of the architectural features so often inherent in historic properties, the historic character evident in the architecture of the district and the richness of the community's past, and their attachment to the particular area.

Finding 2: Place attachment to community and state.

Focus group participants often discussed their attachment both to the individual community in which they owned property and to the state of Oklahoma. The benefits of living in a community in which they had deep roots, both with members of their family and the larger community, and considered to be a good place in which to raise their family were particularly important. A connection to current family members was one of the factors that influenced the high level of place attachment evidenced through discussions, but connections to the lives and actions of past family members no longer living was equally meaningful.

Part of this feeling of connection to past family members could be a result of the relative youth of Oklahoma as a state. Large-scale settlement by Anglo-American residents primarily occurred only after 1889 and the first of several land runs to settle what was then known as “Indian Territory,” with statehood occurring in 1907. Although these actions are old enough to not be in the living memory of a current family member, they may have occurred in the memory of only one or two generations past and therefore may be somewhat “fresh” in the annals of a family’s history. This may engender a heightened feeling of connection to family members, thereby reinforcing place attachment for a community or specific area. Owning property in the same area and perhaps driving past evidence of family history on a regular basis might further reinforce this attachment to their community.

Finding 3: Appreciation of architectural features.

The aesthetic value of the architectural features of homes and buildings in the historic districts in which the focus group participants owned property played a key role in motivating them to purchase the property. These architectural features help differentiate historic properties from the more contemporary architecture that makes up the overwhelming majority of buildings in most communities. Property owners appreciate the beauty of these features as well as the high level of skill required to produce them.

One conclusion that can be developed from these interpretations is that property owners within the selected historic districts desire to own a home or building that is aesthetically pleasing. Often, buildings produced today tend to be in neighborhoods or on city streets that make little effort to be architecturally distinctive; while architects and builders certainly do not strive to design and build homes or office buildings that are unattractive, neither do they necessarily emphasize the aesthetics of the property as a whole. For example, perhaps the façade has a decorative brick pattern, but the remaining three sides may be covered in siding to save money. In contrast, historic properties often have distinctive features in greater abundance that contribute to the overall beauty of the home or building.

Another conclusion drawn from this finding is that the presence of unique architectural features helps historic properties appear less institutional and mass-produced than current architecture. Several focus group participants mentioned their distaste for "cookie-cutter" homes or buildings—newer neighborhoods consisting of only a few house plans repeated throughout the area or ubiquitous strip malls created from tilt-up concrete panels and storefront windows. While rarity is one factor that makes a historic property significant, it also serves to separate it from the common, less distinctive architecture produced today that may place less emphasis on aesthetic value than on speed of construction and an economical price point to target a particular market.

Finding 4: Appreciation of historic character.

Several focus group participants who owned property in residential historic districts discussed the influence that the historic character of the district had, both on their decision to purchase a home there and on their enjoyment of the district after purchase. As described by the participants, this historic character was not based solely on the architectural features of the district, but also included history of the people and places there as well. Although many discussed their appreciation of the more aesthetic elements of the district, through their stories about past residents it was also evident that their knowledge of the lives and activities of these people enriched their experience of living in the district.

One explanation of this might be found in the inherent nature of Oklahoma. Ideologically, much of the state is conservative; this may indicate a more traditional culture that honors and strives to perpetuate regional heritage, both in architecture and society. Oklahoma is primarily rural, and its residents value a strong work ethic; hearing stories about past residents of their community and their hard work that produced the rich culture of today engenders an appreciation of those who came before. Historic homes with distinctive architectural features may be the outward symbol of history, but with the addition of knowledge of past residents, property owners in residential historic districts experience a meaningful connection to the past.

Finding 5: Participation in a community's history.

For those participants who owned property in a commercial historic district, the potential to be part of the legacy of the community was particularly meaningful.

Although the theme representing a *Sense of Identity* was not evident in sufficient quantities to warrant discussion in Chapter IV, several focus group participants discussed their feeling of pride in owning property in the district which could be interpreted as contributing to their sense of identity. For example, due to the highly desirable nature of this property in some districts, ownership may imply a certain socio-economic level that elevates the perceived status of these owners within the community. Also, ownership may provide owners with the ability to have an impact on larger numbers of community members due to an increased level of exposure compared with that in residential districts; this might also include documentation of their activities in local media as a result of their contributions to the local economy. However, many participants also indicated a sense of stewardship for the buildings in the community which represent tangible symbols of the past.

These interpretations lead to the conclusion that property owners in commercial historic districts may seek out this type of property to enable them to become active participants in the legacy of the community. Although prominent or wealthy citizens may be officially recognized for posterity more often, the masses of "ordinary" property and business owners who contribute to the daily running of the community are vital to ensuring its success over time. A significant component in a community's legacy is the continued effectiveness of the built environment for the needs of the community at any point in time. Property owners who contribute to the economic infrastructure of the community understand the importance of their role as stewards of the built environment and maintaining the integrity of the buildings so that the potential for profitability is increased over time. In historic districts this stewardship may be even more critical if the historic character of the area results in revenue generated from heritage tourism.

Finding 6: Impact of maintenance and repair.

The continual maintenance of historic properties was a common element throughout focus group discussions, particularly the high cost of building materials and specialized labor required to make repairs. Because current materials may not be manufactured in the same way or the same size needed to match historic materials, there are few companies who still produce these items, making them costly and difficult to acquire. As a result, property owners may need to generate higher levels of revenue or own the property longer to recover costs. They may also have more difficulty in securing a loan with which to make repairs or rehabilitate a building, depending on the original condition; some institutions may be reluctant to loan money to an owner if the property has a very low value due to its poor condition.

As a result, complying with preservation standards may be a significant financial burden on property owners. Depending on its location, there may be more than one layer of preservation oversight for the district; while the majority of property owners in a historic district actively strive to be compliant with established standards, the rarity and expense of labor and materials makes repairs difficult and time-consuming. There are certainly historic districts in the state that represent a very high socio-economic level for owners and residents; however, these are in the minority, and property owners in many districts are far from affluent. Purchasing expensive materials to maintain the historic integrity of a property along with hiring skilled tradespeople to make the repairs can be difficult, if not impossible. While all focus group participants lamented the financial burden, most mentioned their eventual ability to make the necessary repairs or rehabilitations to meet preservation standards. However, more than one participant discussed being in the unfortunate position of owning historic property but lacking the finances to make the approved repairs for themselves and also being unable to sell it without making the repairs—in essence, they were stuck with the property. Although they valued the location within the historic district, the established standards for repair or rehabilitation introduced a burden that would not have been present if the property was located elsewhere.

Finding 7: Difficulties with the preservation system.

As discussed in the previous finding, property owners experienced a significant financial burden while attempting to maintain or rehabilitate their historic properties. Based on focus group participant comments, this seems to stem from their difficulty working with the preservation system and the inherent limitations on aesthetic choices and requirements for specific repair techniques and/or materials to maintain historic integrity. This difficulty is influenced by several factors:

- Some property owners do not understand the reality of living in a registered historic district and have little knowledge of where to acquire appropriate resources.
- Realtors working in historic districts may not know or communicate this designation to potential buyers.

- In some districts, oversight and enforcement of preservation codes is inconsistent or unclear.
- Some property owners may be unable to make approved repairs due to the high cost and lack of availability of appropriate building materials.
- Property owners may ultimately feel that owners' rights take precedence over a separate preservation organization.

These observations lead to the conclusion that there is a great deal of confusion and lack of information on the part of property owners regarding the function of their jurisdictional preservation oversight body and compliance with established standards. While the overwhelming majority of respondents to the survey in this study understood that they owned property within a nationally registered historic district, the researcher spoke with several people who were not aware of this and questioned why they received a survey. Conveying the breadth of information required by the preservation community to every property owner of a district is a daunting prospect, particularly in districts with a limited work force experienced in this area or limited ability to hire these professionals to staff a municipal agency. Further, if buyers are not informed by realtors about the necessity to remain complaint with preservation requirements, they may not know to seek out information from the community or to follow established standards when making repairs.

It is possible that some of the confusion and lack of information on the part of some property owners results from their perception of the value of historic designation. Based on focus group comments, it is evident that *every* participant valued the historic nature of their property; the age and history behind the property was very meaningful.

While some participants specifically mentioned seeking out a historic area and taking pride in owning property in a *registered* historic district, more than one participant commented that historic designation by the National Register of Historic Places was not important to them. So it is possible that the features that make the district "historically significant" to property owners differ from what is accepted as significant by the National Register, resulting in confusion about the importance of compliance with the standards established by the jurisdictional preservation oversight body.

Implications and Recommendations for Stakeholders

Each of the conclusions discussed above has implications for various groups instrumental in the preservation of Oklahoma's historic resources. Based on previous analysis and synthesis of participant comments by the researcher to further explain the key findings in this study, four broad groups were identified as stakeholders in the future success of preservation in the state and are presented in ascending order of their potential influence on existing and future historic districts; these are (a) educators, (b) the interior design and architecture professions, (c) preservation officials and related industries, and (d) community governance. This section discusses the implications for these groups as well as recommendations for further action based on the findings, interpretations, and conclusions discussed above and in Chapter V.

Educators.

As discussed in Finding 2, participants reported a strong level of place attachment, which can be enhanced by daily experiences and interactions with a community over time; educators within the community can be integral to communicating information about important features that enhance those daily experiences. Working with the community to convey the richness of the past—not only of those individuals deemed "important" to the development of the area, but also those considered more "ordinary" but no less vital to the success of the community over time—educators could enhance this feeling of place attachment for all property owners and promote the importance of maintaining the historic integrity of the area so that future generations would also be able to know about and feel connected to their ancestors. These people go beyond the "founding fathers" to others who also lived and worked in the community, if in a quieter, less public, but no less valuable way. Even though they may be undocumented, they had families, friends, and colleagues who might have shared information with others that could be collected and disseminated.

Educators in communities across Oklahoma could play a vital role in distributing this information to simultaneously inform the public and support the efforts of preservation. Two ways they could accomplish this are (a) enlisting the help of the community to produce a very rich, inclusive history of the area, and (b) using this information as the basis for prominently displaying the results to inform those visiting the community. To complete the first activity, local educators in primary and secondary schools (as well as higher education, if present) would work with students to gather, research, document, and organize information about the people and activities that contributed to the development of the community. These activities are also consistent with the goals of the statewide preservation plan, specifically Goal #1 that promotes the development of programs related to preservation within the local schools (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2010). The results of this exercise could provide information that would serve as the basis for the second technique mentioned above—displays implemented within the community. These signs or plaques could be financed by a chapter of Oklahoma Main Street organization (if present in the community) or by the local municipality or Chamber of Commerce, and would provide a technique to engender a feeling of place attachment that went beyond the boundaries of the historic district and promote support for care of the community as a whole.

Vocational education could also actively support the larger community by offering programs targeted toward the goals of preservation. These programs could teach skills necessary for working on historic buildings to the labor force of the area; this is beneficial for the community in several areas. First, these programs could provide young people in the area with a marketable skill that could lead to a successful, lifelong career path. Second, introducing skilled labor into the local economy supports property owners and the historic built environment while adding to the revenue of the community as a whole when these workers purchase goods and services. Finally, these programs could serve as a way to connect a diverse segment of the population. The skills of working with historic building techniques and materials are valuable because of their rarity; many focus group participants discussed the lack of practitioners today due to their advanced age and the realization that they are dying and taking their unique knowledge with them. Vocational programs could pair young people learning a craft with existing local practitioners; this would pass on valuable knowledge in many ways—knowledge of the craft, knowledge of the community and its history, and knowledge of life skills acquired over time. Older practitioners could also serve as mentors and advisors once young learners entered the workforce. This would serve to enrich the community and its economic health, but would also provide another meaningful connection to the district and larger community for property owners and inhabitants.

Interior design and architecture professions.

Appreciation of the aesthetic value of architectural features (discussed above in Finding 3) and the historic character seen in historic districts (discussed in Finding 4) were frequently mentioned in focus group discussions, and has implications for the interior design and architecture professions. Because of their extensive knowledge, resources, and background in architectural history, the researcher recommends the participation of interior designers and architects to help educate the larger community about the historical significance of the architectural features of historic homes. For example, architects explaining the meaning behind a particular carving on the face of a building might help residents develop a deeper understanding of the time period represented or the historic event the carving portrays, further enhancing their appreciation of the feature; interior designers could explain the evolution of the arrangement of interior spaces and their historic uses. This heightened appreciation could encourage owners to take more pride in the district and promote its maintenance or rehabilitation to further protect historic resources for the future.

In an effort to educate a historic district's property owners, these professions could offer local courses or workshops at little or no cost to the public. These courses could identify and discuss typical architectural features found on local homes and buildings, the meaning behind them or the social or political trends that led to their development and application to homes or buildings of the time period, and how they contribute to the historic character of the area. These courses would differ from those offered by SHPO that are dedicated to understanding and working with the National Register, and focus specifically on architectural and design elements of the local historic district. These courses might be conducted by the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), or the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) in conjunction with the historic preservation architect for SHPO, and could rotate to various locations around the state. This information could also be integrated into docent-led walking tours developed by AIA, ASID or IIDA members and provided to each district for dissemination by a local resident.

Preservation partners.

As seen above in discussion under Finding 1, some property owners who initially purchased property for the potentially positive return on investment felt a greater meaning beyond a financial benefit; this has an implication for investors who might consider or even specialize in rehabilitating properties located within historic districts. Investors who do not plan to occupy the property they own have a vested interest in rehabilitating the building to be compliant with established preservation standards to maintain the appearance of the district. Because other property owners have found aesthetic features and historic character meaningful, it is suggested that those aspects will be meaningful to potential renters who will be more likely to pursue property that is consistent with the prevailing aesthetic of the district. This in turn will increase the likelihood of that high return on investment initially envisioned by those rehabilitating the property.

To facilitate a historically sensitive and appropriate rehabilitation, a recommendation would be for investors who purchase property in Oklahoma historic district for financial reasons to gain knowledge in the breadth of factors important to the successful rehabilitation of property in a historic district; this could be accomplished through the outreach of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). SHPO conducts semi-annual workshops on a variety of topics around the state; while these workshops currently include topics critical to successful rehabilitation, a session targeted specifically to those rehabilitating property for investment purposes could provide information on topics such as the importance of place attachment and maintaining historic character beyond architectural features. This recommendation would also be consistent with some of the goals set by SHPO as part of their statewide preservation plan, specifically Goal #2 that seeks to increase their "network of preservation partners" and Goal #4 that addresses the development of successful working relationships to further safeguard historic resources (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2010).

Sensitive rehabilitation of historic resources also has implications for both construction and financial institutions. The difficulties of completing appropriate rehabilitations or repairs discussed in focus groups and synthesized into Finding 6 may, in part, be the result of regional influences (the relatively few number of historic properties in Oklahoma compared with other areas of the nation); nationally the manufacturing and construction industries no longer provide adequate resources—materials and skilled labor—to support the demands of this sector of the built environment. Today's manufacturing industry supplies products for current construction techniques that rely on standardization to be economically efficient. However, historic properties are anything but standard. The need to search the nation for building supplies to repair or rehabilitate a historic building simply adds to the difficulty and expense of maintaining our historic resources, and ultimately reduces the environmental and economic sustainability of the district.

While there are certainly manufacturing facilities that fabricate building materials appropriate for historic rehabilitations and tradespeople skilled in historic building techniques (and undoubtedly some that specialize in this area), they are not well-known by the majority of property owners. A recommendation for these partners in preservation would be more wide-spread marketing of their goods and services. It is possible that a campaign that informs smaller markets such as those found in Oklahoma about trained personnel or historically appropriate building materials could generate enough revenue to warrant the establishment of manufacturing facilities in the state. Oklahoma pursues industries that have the potential to become positive contributors to the state's economy; establishment of a manufacturing facility in the state that specializes in historically accurate materials might even bring in revenue from those in other states seeking this type of product.

The financial industry may further complicate the maintenance process if funds are not available to support these activities. Due to the recent economic crisis in the nation, loans may be more difficult to obtain, and have more demands for qualification and repayment. As mentioned above, many owners in Oklahoma historic districts are not affluent and often must seek supplementary funding to complete anything beyond minor repairs. In uncertain economic times, taking on additional financial burdens may be risky, if not impossible, depending on past credit history or current employment conditions.

A recommendation for financial institutions would be to partner with state and national preservation officials to establish a program that provides grants for property owners who are rehabilitating properties that are owner-occupied and not income-producing. Current policy provides resources and tax incentives for properties that are income-producing; many residential properties do not fit into that category, but owners still need supplementary financial resources for rehabilitation or maintenance. Funding available in conjunction with the state or national preservation community would connect both partners in the process. One option might be to establish a grant program specifically for rehabilitations or repairs made to owner-occupied properties through the Oklahoma Housing Finance Agency that could be administered in conjunction with the Oklahoma SHPO office. This would enable owners of residential property to complete necessary repairs without going into debt, as happens with a second mortgage or other type of loan. Providing these financial resources through the preservation community would also support Goal #5 of SHPO's statewide preservation plan to "enact legislation to establish local financial incentives and identify public and private sector funding" (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2010).

However, before financial resources for rehabilitation or maintenance can be sought, property owners must fully understand the importance of compliance with established preservation standards and the variety of resources necessary to do so. Their confusion about this was evident throughout the focus groups and discussed in Finding 7 above. This has implications for local and state preservation officials; while there are abundant resources available through the National Park Service, National Trust for Historic Preservation, and State Historic Preservation Office that explain the process of historic designation and provide information for rehabilitation and maintenance, these may not be consistently, clearly—and perhaps most important, *simply*—communicated to individual property owners within Oklahoma historic districts. In some cases, there just may not be enough municipal manpower to enforce established standards or communicate the need to check with a preservation official before beginning repairs. However, even for those who know to look for information and who strive to meet requirements, the complexity can be overwhelming. In addition, there are property owners who feel their rights take precedence over the requirements of the preservation community, and may have no incentive to be compliant, particularly if there are no repercussions for noncompliance.

Preservation officials could facilitate knowledge about existing preservation requirements and the importance of following them by developing and disseminating a kit containing basic information for the district. Developed by preservation officials for the applicable jurisdiction, this could be disseminated through the lending institution that conducts real estate closings and given to every new buyer of property in a historic district. It should contain important contact information for the local preservation oversight body, a list of relevant codes, and other pertinent information along with a list of available resources. The kit could also include a comprehensive inventory of resources available for individual districts or surrounding communities that encompasses the financial, construction, and manufacturing industries; this would be an invaluable resource to property owners, satisfying one focus group participant's wish for a master list dedicated to preservation resources. Although this could be a difficult task for even the smallest community, the value to property owners would be immense, and it would also serve to stimulate the local economy as property owners seek out and hire local tradespeople. To be successful, this process should be coordinated through the real estate community; this would also serve to educate local realtors about the presence of and requirements for historic districts which they would then be expected to pass along to their clients. Perhaps equally important as content, the method of delivery should emphasize user-friendliness to be most practical for property owners in the district. This type of preservation kit could also help satisfy additional components of the statewide plan developed by SHPO, specifically those stated in Goals #1 and #2 to develop effective relationships with local media for the purpose of delivering information to the public in a variety of formats (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2010).

Community governance.

There are implications for the governing body of the historic district or larger community in which it is located. As discussed in Finding 5, for those areas dependent on the success of property owners in the commercial district, emphasis on enhancing the sense of stewardship within the district could encourage owners to consistently and sensitively maintain the appearance and integrity of the historic buildings. Communicating the significance of the historic district to the overall economic and cultural health of the community could enlighten property owners to the importance of their individual contribution as they ensure their buildings remain in operation for future generations, and further reinforce the feeling of pride reported by focus group participants in this study. When buildings are maintained and utilized over time, they serve as symbols of the stability and longevity of the community—meaningful reminders of the passage of time and touchstones for those who remain in the community or return after time away.

To enhance the perception of a community's longevity and the role that property owners play as stewards of the built environment, it is recommended that community governing bodies develop a marketing campaign that highlights the heritage of the area and the ways in which owners of commercial property contribute to the vitality and economic health of the area. If the district or community participates in the Oklahoma Main Street organization, that group is particularly equipped to address this type of campaign as part of their activities to promote economic revitalization of the jurisdiction. However, if there is no Main Street chapter in place, the local Chamber of Commerce could develop the campaign, perhaps in conjunction with a local historical society. Another partner in the development of this campaign could be a local high school or university. The community could work with educators and students to develop a timeline identifying those businesses that operated in a particular building since its construction to show the direct connection between past and present and enhance the perception of stewardship for the current property owner. This also corresponds with SHPO Goal #1 to promote the development of programs related to preservation within local schools (Oklahoma Historical Society, 2010).

Another option that would allow a community to promote a sense of stewardship and support business owners within the historic district could be to become a Certified Local Government (CLG). This allows districts to become eligible for grants administered through SHPO that could be a valuable source of support, and puts control of preservation within the district very much in local hands through the establishment of an official oversight body. A CLG also eases the process for some of the suggestions made above, such as marketing campaigns and published information, as well as providing the opportunity to apply for grants for actual rehabilitation projects of those buildings owned by the community (Tyler, 2009, pp. 187-188).

Recommendations for future study.

This study is the first to investigate issues related to property ownership in Oklahoma historic districts; while a wealth of valuable information resulted from both survey responses and focus group participant comments, questions remain that indicate the need for further study in a three specific areas. The first of these addresses the state as a whole—working within the state's division into preservation management regions by SHPO, might there be information about individual historic districts that is attributable to differences between the distinct regions? Second, there could be value in conducting a case study of the city of Guthrie and both historic districts there. This study included only one historic district which is primarily residential in composition; however, there is a smaller commercial district in Guthrie that was excluded from the study due to its designation as a National Historic Landmark district. The overwhelming response from property owners in Guthrie indicates an interest in and dedication to preservation. Is there something in place in Guthrie that might be implemented in other districts? Finally, it is evident that realtors can contribute to preservation efforts; the majority of property owners must utilize the services of a professional real estate agent to facilitate the purchase of property—historic or otherwise. It would be beneficial to speak with this group to gain insight into their knowledge of why people choose to purchase—or to sell—historic property, as well as to learn how their training prepares them to work in historic areas.

This study hopes to provide insight into the factors that influence and impact property ownership in Oklahoma historic districts. The state's historic resources deserve to flourish, and thanks to current interests in sustainability, homes and buildings are viewed with a new perspective, and are being utilized in interesting, contemporary ways. If property owners in Oklahoma are encouraged to purchase historic property and supported with adequate and appropriate resources, the state's historic districts will continue to contribute to the richness of our communities through appreciation of their heritage and the value of future incarnations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Oklahoma Historic Districts within SHPO Management Regions

Region 2

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Garfield	Enid	45,309	C	Enid Downtown Historic District		Rural	2007	Y	A,C
			C	Enid Terminal Grain Elevators Historic District	*	Rural	2009		A,C
			R	Kenwood Historic District		Rural	2004		A,C
			R	Waverly Historic District		Rural	2006		A,C
Harper	Laverne	1,269	C	Laverne's North Main Street District		Rural	1984	Y	A,C
Kay	Marland	264	R	101 Ranch Historic District	*†	Rural	1975		A,B
	Newkirk	2,168	C	Newkirk Central Business District		Rural	1984	Y	A,C
	Ponca City	26,359	C	Downtown Ponca City Historic District		Rural	2011	Y	A,C,a
Noble	Perry	4,978	C	Perry Courthouse Square Historic District		Rural	2003	Y	A,C
Woodward	Fort Supply	330	C	Fort Supply Historic District, Western State Hospital Grounds	*	Rural	1971		A

* Removed from study - (no private owner)

† Removed from study - National Historic Landmark district

Region 3

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Creek	Sapulpa	20,544	C	Sapulpa Downtown Historic District		Rural	2002	Y	A,C
Mayes	Chouteau	2,097	C	Territorial Commercial District of Chouteau		Rural	1983		A,C
McIntosh	Checotah	3,290	C	Checotah Business District		Rural	1982		A,C
	Eufaula	2,652	C	Eufaula Business District		Rural	1988		A,a
Muskogee	Fort Gibson	4,154	C	Fort Gibson Historic District	†	Rural	1966		A
	Muskogee	37,708	R	Kendall Place Historic District		Rural	2005	Y	A,C
			C	Muskogee Depot & Freight District		Rural	2006		A,C
			C	Pre-Statehood Commercial District		Rural	1983		A
Okfuskee	Boley	908	C	Boley Historic District	†	Rural	1975		A,a
Okmulgee	Okmulgee	13,441	C	Okmulgee Downtown Historic District		Rural	1992	Y	A,C

Region 3 (cont.)

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Osage	Barnsdall	1,243	R	Woolaroc Ranch Historic District	*	Rural	2008		B,C
	Pawhuska	3,584	C	Pawhuska Downtown Historic District		Rural	1986		A,C
Ottawa	Miami	13,592	C	Miami Downtown Historic District		Rural	2009	Y	A,C
Pawnee	Pawnee	2,196	C	Pawnee Agency & Boarding School Historic District	*	Rural	2000		A,C
Rogers	Claremore	18,581	C	Eastern School University Preparatory	*	Rural	1982	Y	A
Tulsa	Tulsa	391,906	C	Blue Dome Historic District		Urban	2011		A
			R	Brady Heights Historic District		Urban	1980		C
			C	Brady Historic District		Urban	2010		A
			R	Buena Vista Park Historic District		Urban	2007		C
			R	Carlton Place Historic District		Urban	2007		A
			R	Gillette Historic District		Urban	1982		C
			C	KATY Railroad Historic District		Urban	2010		A
			R	Maple Ridge Historic Residential District		Urban	1983		A,C
			C	North Cheyenne Avenue Historic District		Urban	2010		A
			C	Oil Capitol Historic District		Urban	2010		A,a
			R	Owen Park Historic District		Urban	1999		A,C
			R	Ranch Acres Historic District		Urban	2007		C
			R	Riverside Historic Residential District		Urban	2005		A,C
			R	Riverview Historic District		Urban	2007		C
			M	Sixth St. Commercial/Residential Historic District		Urban	2009		A
			R	Stonebraker Heights Historic District		Urban	2007		C

* Removed from study - (no private owner)

† Removed from study - National Historic Landmark district

Region 3 (cont.)

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Tulsa	Tulsa		R	Swan Lake Historic District		Urban	2009		A,C
			R	Tracy Park Historic District		Urban	1982		A,C
			C	Tulsa Civic Center Historic District		Urban	2012		A,C,g
			R	White City Historic District		Urban	2001		A,C
			R	Yorktown Historic District		Urban	2002		A,C
Wagoner	Okay	620	R	Rio Grande Ranch Headquarters Historic District	*	Rural	1992		A,C
Wash'ton	Bartlesville	34,750	C	Bartlesville Downtown Historic District		Rural	1991/2004	Y	A,C

* Removed from study - (no private owner)

† Removed from study - National Historic Landmark district

Region 4

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Bryan	Durant	12,823	C	Durant Downtown Historic District		Rural	2007	Y	A
Choctaw	Hugo	5,978	C	Hugo Historic District		Rural	1980		A

Region 5

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Carter	Ardmore	23,079	C	Ardmore Historic Commercial District		Rural	1983/2005	Y	A,C
Garvin	Pauls Valley	6,150	C	Pauls Valley Historic District		Rural	1979	Y	A,C
Murray	Sulphur	4,824	C	Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District		Rural	2001	Y	A,C
			C	Platt National Park Historic District	*†	Rural	2011		A,C
Pontatoc	Ada	16,180	C	Wintersmith Park Historic District	*	Rural	2000	Y	A,C
Pottawat	Shawnee	26,017	C	Bell Street Historic District		Rural	2000	Y	A,C
			C	St. Gregory's Abbey & College	*	Rural	1975		A,C,a

Region 6

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Cleveland	Norman	80,071	R	DeBarr Historic District		Rural	1981		A,C
			C	Norman Historic District		Rural	1978		A
			C	OK Center for Continuing Education Historic District	*	Urban	2011		C
Lincoln	Davenport	814	C	Davenport Broadway Ave. Brick Street Historic District		Rural	2004		A
Logan	Guthrie	10,518	R	Guthrie Historic District		Rural	1974		A,C
			C	Guthrie Natl. Historic Landmark District	*†	Rural	1999		A,C
	Langston	1,724	R	Langston Univ. Cottage Row Historic District	*	Rural	1999		A,C
Oklahoma	OKC	579,999	C	Automobile Alley Historic District		Urban	1999		A,C
			R	Capitol-Lincoln Terrace Historic District		Urban	1976		A,B,C,g
			R	Carey Place Historic District		Urban	1998		C
			R	Crown Heights Historic District		Urban	1995		A,C
			R	Edgemere Park Historic District		Urban	1980		B,C,g
			R	Edwards Heights Historic District		Urban	2005		A,C
			R	Edwards Historic District		Urban	1996		A,B
			C	Film Exchange Historic District		Urban	2007		A,C
			C	First Christian Church Historic District		Urban	2011		C,a
			R	Gatewood East Historic District		Urban	2004		A,C
			R	Gatewood West Historic District		Urban	2004		C
			R	Heritage Hills Historic & Architectural District		Urban	1979		A,B,C,g
			R	Jefferson Park Historic District		Urban	1995		A,C
			R	Lincoln Terrace East Historic District		Urban	2004		C

* Removed from study - (no private owner)

† Removed from study - National Historic Landmark district

Region 6 (cont.)

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
			C	Maney Historic District		Urban	1979		B,C,b
Oklahoma	OKC		R	Mesta Park District		Urban	1983		C
			C	Oklahoma City University	*	Urban	1978		A,a
			R	Paseo Neighborhood Historic District		Urban	2004		A,C
			R	Putnam Heights Historic Preservation District		Urban	1982		A,B,C,g
			R	Shepherd Historic District		Urban	1997		C
			C	Stockyards City Historic District		Urban	1979	Y	A
Payne	Perkins	1,925	C	Perkins Downtown Historic District		Rural	2000		A,C

* Removed from study - (no private owner)

† Removed from study - National Historic Landmark district

Region 7

County	City	Population	Type	Name of District		Classification	Yr. of Listing	Main St.	NR Criteria
Beckham	Sayre	2,881	C	Sayre Downtown Historic District		Rural	1992		A,C
Caddo	Anadarko	6,586	C	Anadarko Downtown Historic District		Rural	1990		A,C
Comanche	Fort Sill	55,000	R	Fort Sill Historic District	*†	Rural	1960		A
Grady	Chickasha	14,988	C	Chickasha Downtown Historic District		Rural	2005		A,C
			C	Ok. College for Women Historic District	*	Rural	2001/2007		A,C
Greer	Mangum	3,344	C	Downtown Mangum Historic District		Rural	2009	Y	A
Kiowa	Hobart	4,305	C	Downtown Hobart Historic District		Rural	2005	Y	A,C
Tillman	Grandfield	1,224	C	Grandfield Downtown Historic District		Rural	2002		A
Washita	Cordell	2,915	C	New Cordell Courthouse Square Historic District		Rural	2002		A,C

Appendix B

Institutional Review Board Approvals

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Wednesday, August 01, 2012
IRB Application No	HE1249
Proposal Title:	Factors that Influence Property Ownership in Oklahoma Historic Districts
Reviewed and Processed as:	Exempt

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 7/31/2013

Principal Investigator(s):

Valerie L. Settles	Randall R. Russ
8009 N.W. 30th	434B HES
Bethany, OK 73008	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

[X] The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval. Protocol modifications requiring approval may include changes to the title, PI, advisor, funding status or sponsor, subject population composition or size, recruitment, inclusion/exclusion criteria, research site, research procedures and consent/assent process or forms.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia M. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date	Wednesday, July 03, 2013	**Protocol Expires:**	**7/2/2016**
IRB Application No:	HE1249		
Proposal Title:	Factors that Influence Property Ownership in Oklahoma Historic Districts		

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt
Continuation

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) **Approved**

Principal Investigator(s)

Valerie L. Settles	Mihyun Kang
8009 N.W. 30th	442 HES
Bethany, OK 73008	Stillwater, OK 74078

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

The reviewer(s) had these comments:

Continuation includes change to add focus group of 6-10 realtors and real estate developers and to contact all who respond to survey with willingness to participate in focus groups with those groups now being 4-6 participants.

Signature : Shelia M. Kennison

Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Wednesday, July 03, 2013
Date

Appendix C

Demographic Survey Cover Letter

Design, Housing and Merchandising
COLLEGE OF HUMAN SCIENCES

Hello:

I am a doctoral student within Oklahoma State University's Department of Design, Housing & Merchandising in the College of Human Sciences. I am investigating the factors that influence property ownership in historic districts in Oklahoma. You have been sent this survey because public records indicate that you own property in a historic district in Oklahoma listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Will you please take a few minutes to participate in this study concerning property ownership? Your input is very important. Survey results will be used to compile information that helps describe the characteristics of people who choose to purchase property in historic districts. Your responses will help the preservation community better understand the needs of property owners and potential property owners so that appropriate resources can be developed and distributed where needed.

Owners of property in a historic district in Oklahoma are invited to participate. If you are living or working at the address at which this survey was received, but do not own the property, please disregard this survey or direct it to the owner of the property.

Your participation is completely voluntary and will only take 5-10 minutes. There are no known risks associated with this study that are greater than those you would find in daily life. Your response will remain confidential, and the answers will not be identifiable for a specific person unless you choose to participate in a further study on this topic and provide contact information in the area provided at the end of the survey. Responses will be stored indefinitely, with no personal identifiers, in the office of the researcher, accessible only by that person. While I would like you to answer the research survey completely, you have the right not to respond to any question for whatever personal reason you may have.

To participate in this study, you must be **at least 18 years of age.**

If you have questions about this survey, please contact Valerie Settles at (405) 974-5219 or via e-mail at valerie.settles@okstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, (405) 744-3377 or irb@okstate.edu.

Thank you for your participation in this study and the valuable information you are providing.

Updated: April, 2012

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 10/31/12
Expires 7/31/13
IRB # HE1249

Appendix D

Demographic Survey Questions – Home

Demographic Survey Questions

1) In what year was your property built? _______________
2) How long have you owned this property? __________________
3) Did you know this property was located within a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places when you decided to purchase it?
   Please circle: Yes No
4) Did you inherit this property? Please circle: Yes No
5) Have you owned other property in a historic district in the past?
   Please circle: Yes No If so, when? ______________
6) Do you currently own property other than this? Please circle: Yes No

   If so, is this property also in a historic district? Please circle: Yes No

   Where? ____

7) What is your profession? ____
8) What is your age range? 18 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 55 56 – 65 66 – 75 over 75
9) What is the income range for your household? Please circle:

Less than $25,000	$25,000 – $49,000	$50,000 – $99,000
$100,000 – $149,000	$150,000 – $199,000	$200,000 – $249,000
$250,000 – $299,000	$300,000 – $349,000	$350,000 – $399,000
Above $400,000		

10) What is the marital status of the primary owner(s)? Please circle: Married
    Single Widowed Divorced Single with significant other
11) What is/are the gender(s) of the primary owner(s)? Please circle: Male Female
12) What is the race/ethnicity of the primary owner(s)? Please circle:

African–American	American Indian
Asian	Caucasian (not Hispanic or Latino)
Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Two or More Races – Please list: ____

This survey is part of a larger study investigating factors that influence property ownership in historic districts in Oklahoma. If you would be willing to participant in a small focus group of other property owners in this historic district, please provide your contact information below.

Name __________________________________ Telephone ______________________

Address _________________________________ Email _________________________

Preferred method of contact ____

Appendix E

Demographic Survey Questions – Business

Demographic Survey Questions

1) In what year was your property built? _______________
2) How long have you owned this property? __________________
3) Did you know this property was located within a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places when you decided to purchase it?
   Please circle: Yes No
4) Did you inherit this property? Please circle: Yes No
5) Have you owned other property in a historic district in the past?
   Please circle: Yes No If so, when? ______________
6) Do you currently own property other than this? Please circle: Yes No

   If so, is this property also in a historic district? Please circle: Yes No

   Where? ____

7) What is your profession? ____
8) What is your age range? 18 – 25 26 – 35 36 – 45 46 – 55 56 – 65 66 – 75 over 75
9) What is the income range for your business? Please circle:

Less than $25,000	$25,000 – $49,000	$50,000 – $99,000
$100,000 – $149,000	$150,000 – $199,000	$200,000 – $249,000
$250,000 – $299,000	$300,000 – $349,000	$350,000 – $399,000
Above $400,000		

10) What is the marital status of the primary owner(s)? Please circle: Married
    Single Widowed Divorced Single with significant other
11) What is/are the gender(s) of the primary owner(s)? Please circle: Male Female
12) What is the race/ethnicity of the primary owner(s)? Please circle:

African–American	American Indian
Asian	Caucasian (not Hispanic or Latino)
Hispanic or Latino	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

Two or More Races – Please list: ____

This survey is part of a larger study investigating factors that influence property ownership in historic districts in Oklahoma. If you would be willing to participant in a small focus group of other property owners in this historic district, please provide your contact information below.

Name __________________________________Telephone______________________

Address_________________________________Email _________________________

Preferred method of contact____

Appendix F

Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions

1) Would everyone please state your name and the age of your property?

2) When you were first thinking of purchasing property, what area(s) of the state or nation did you consider?

    a. What were your reasons for looking in that area(s)?

3) What led you to this particular area and property?

4) What are some of the reasons you acquired this property?

5) Did you own your property before or after the district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places?
    a. If before, have there been changes in the district since listing on the NR?

    b. If so, what are they?

    c. Why do you think these changes have occurred?

6) Are there positive aspects of owning property in a historic district?
    a. If so, what are they?

7) Are there negative aspects of owning property in a historic district?
    a. If so, what are they?
    b. What changes would you like to see?

8) Would you be willing to acquire property again in a historic district?
    a. Why or why not?

9) If so, would this property be in addition to what you already own?

10) What does it mean to you to own property in a historic district?

11) What is the one thing you would tell other people thinking of purchasing property in a historic district?

Appendix G

Informed Consent Form for Focus Groups

Informed Consent Document

Factors that Influence Property Ownership in Oklahoma Historic Districts

Primary Investigator: Valerie L. Settles, Ph.D Student, Department of Design, Housing, and Merchandising, Oklahoma State University

I am investigating the factors that influence property ownership in historic districts in Oklahoma. Your responses during the focus group discussion will help the preservation community better understand the needs of property owners and potential property owners so that appropriate resources can be developed and distributed appropriately.

You are invited to participate as an owner of property in a historic district in Oklahoma. Your participation is completely voluntary and should take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. The focus group will consist of discussion on approximately twelve questions; the resulting conversation will be recorded on a digital audio recorder. Once the discussion is transcribed by the researcher, it will be mailed to each participant to check for accuracy.

There are no known risks associated with this study that are greater than those you would find in daily life and no direct benefits.

Your responses will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely in the office of the researcher for an indefinite amount of time, and only the researcher and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. In order to protect the confidentially of all participants, please do not discuss the responses given during this focus group outside this location. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

While I would like you to participate in the focus group discussion until it is completed, you have the right not to respond to any question for whatever personal reason you may have and to leave at any time. At the conclusion of the focus group discussion, you will receive a small gift of approximately $20 in value as a token of appreciation for your time and valuable insight.

To participate in this study, you must be **at least 18 years of age.**

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant ____________________ Date ____________

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Researcher ____________________ Date ____________

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 8/1/12
Expires 7/31/13
IRB # HE-12-44

Informed Consent Document

Factors that Influence Property Ownership in Oklahoma Historic Districts

Primary Investigator: Valerie L. Settles, Ph.D Student, Department of Design, Housing, and Merchandising, Oklahoma State University

I am investigating the factors that influence property ownership in historic districts in Oklahoma. Your responses during the focus group discussion will help the preservation community better understand the needs of property owners and potential property owners so that appropriate resources can be developed and distributed appropriately.

You are invited to participate as an owner of property in a historic district in Oklahoma. Your participation is completely voluntary and should take approximately 1 ½ to 2 hours. The focus group will consist of discussion on approximately twelve questions; the resulting conversation will be recorded on a digital audio recorder. Once the discussion is transcribed by the researcher, it will be mailed to each participant to check for accuracy.

There are no known risks associated with this study that are greater than those you would find in daily life and no direct benefits.

Your responses will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored securely in the office of the researcher for an indefinite amount of time, and only the researcher and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. In order to protect the confidentially of all participants, please do not discuss the responses given during this focus group outside this location. It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by research oversight staff responsible for safeguarding the rights and wellbeing of people who participate in research.

While I would like you to participate in the focus group discussion until it is completed, you have the right not to respond to any question for whatever personal reason you may have and to leave at any time. At the conclusion of the focus group discussion, you will receive a small gift of approximately $20 in value as a token of appreciation for your time and valuable insight.

To participate in this study, you must be **at least 18 years of age.**

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

______________________________ ____________________

Signature of Participant Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

______________________________ ____________________

Signature of Researcher Date

Okla. State Univ.
IRB
Approved 7-3-13
Expires 7-2-16
IRB # HE-12-49

Appendix H

Findings / Conclusions Chart

Finding	Interpretations	Conclusions	Implications	Recommendations	Literature
1. Participants purchased property in a historic district for rental property or for high return when selling.	**1)**Incentive to purchase for investment could be initially poor condition of buildings as a result of neglect over time. **2)** Property owners may be aware of favorable market for renters in historic areas. **3)** Possibility of good financial returns was not mentioned when asked if it was meaningful to own property in a historic district.	**1)** The potential for a positive return on investment was a motivation for purchasing property in a historic district, but was not a factor in why owning this type of property was meaningful for owners.	**1)** Property investors have a vested interest in maintaining or improving historic districts to facilitate the rental market.	**1)** SHPO could include sessions in their semi-annual workshops targeted toward those interested in investing in these types of properties or as part of real estate continuing education (fits with SHPO preservation plan Goal #2 to expand network of preservation partners & Goal #4 to develop effective working relationships for protection)	**1)**Asabere & Huffman (1994) **2)**Coulson & Leichenko (2001) **3)**Coulson & Leichenko (2004) **4)**Leichenko, Coulson, & Listokin (2001) **5)**Zahirovic-Herbert & Chatterjee (2011)
2. Participants purchased property in a historic district as a result of place attachment for their community and for Oklahoma.	**1)** Property owners like being around people who remember them and whom they remember from growing up. **2)** The continuity of the historic district and the community represents a sense of stability in a chaotic world. **3)** They value attributes of the community that make it a good place to raise children and want to provide that to their children. **4)** They feel it is important to maintain contact with extended family. **5)** Property owners feel a sense of pride in family connections to the unique history of Oklahoma.	**1)** Because Oklahoma is a young state, the events of early settlement are still somewhat fresh to current property owners; even though they did not occur in their living memory, they may have occurred in only one or two generations removed from today, and therefore seem more connected to current residents. **2)** The presence of family connections - either past or present - contributed to the place attachment felt by participants.	**1)** Educating community members about the history of an area could communicate the richness of heritage and encourage others to purchase historic property.	**1)** Series of plaques placed in a community could educate residents - could include meaningful local (ordinary) history as well as "significant" history; could be researched by local schools or college & financed through Main Street (if applicable) (fits with SHPO pres. plan Goal #1 to develop preservation related curricula for elementary and secondary schools) **2)** A campaign that celebrates and promotes the importance of family - outside a religious context - and the benefits of returning to Oklahoma could strengthen family ties and encourage stronger communities that are more relevant for contemporary residents.	**1)**Brown, Perkins, & Brown (2002) **2)**Saar & Palang (2009) **3)**Trentelman (2009)

Finding	Interpretations	Conclusions	Implications	Recommendations	Literature
3. The aesthetic value of the architectural features of the homes and buildings in the historic district played a key role in motivating participants to purchase property.	**1)** Architectural details differentiate historic buildings from the rest of the buildings that are prevalent today. **2)** Property owners appreciate the beauty of the architectural details. **3)** Property owners appreciate the high level of skill required to produce this type of detail and that is rare today.	**1)** Architectural details help buildings look less institutional and mass-produced. **2)** Aesthetically pleasing buildings are highly desired by potential property owners.	**1)** The design community could provide resources for rehabilitation and education for property owners in historic districts to cultivate appreciation of historic features.	**1)** The design community could provide community-based courses offered at little to no cost to the public that identify & discuss architectural features but different from what is offered by SHPO; could rotate around the state and be given by Preservation Oklahoma or Main Street as well as incorporated into docent-led walking tours to help public understand the context of the features and the importance of protecting them.	**1)**Herzog & Gale (1996) **2)**Levi (2005) **3)**Nasar (1994) **4)**Nyaupane & Timothy (2010)
4. The historic character evidenced in both architectural features and culture of the community was an incentive for the purchaser of property in a residential historic district.	**1)** A combination of the architectural details and the history creates an atmosphere of historic character.	**1)** Oklahoma is more conservative in nature so a more traditional culture that honors heritage (both architectural and cultural) is preferred.	**1)** The academic and design are in the position to educate property owners in historic districts about the heritage of the community to cultivate appreciation of historic features but must be sensitive to what is important to residents - may not necessarily be what is valued by the NR	**1)** The design community could provide community-based courses offered at little to no cost to the public that identify & discuss architectural features but different from what is offered by SHPO; could rotate around the state and be given by Preservation Oklahoma or Main Street **2)** Information related to historic character could be incorporated into docent-led walking tours to help public understand the context of the features and the importance of protecting them.	**1)**Charles (1986) **2)**Levi(2005) **3)**Milligan (2007) **4)**Nyaupane &Timothy2010)

Finding	Interpretations	Conclusions	Implications	Recommendations	Literature
5. Being part of a community's history was an important factor in the incentive to purchase property in a commercial historic district.	**1)**Owning commercial property may require more money that represents a higher socio-economic level that contributes to a sense of identity. **2)** Owning commercial property may contribute to a sense of identity because activities may be more likely to be represented in official media such as newspapers, etc. **3)** Property owners of commercial property may be able to make a greater impact on a large number of people compared to residential property. **4)** Property owners in commercial districts have a sense of stewardship and view ownership as a duty to protect the property for future generations.	**1)** Commercial property owners may seek out this type of property to participate in a community's legacy.	**1)** Community governing bodies may benefit from an emphasis on stewardship to encourage investors in commercial districts.	**1)** Community governing bodies could develop a marketing campaign that highlighted the community's heritage and how contemporary property owners contribute to that. **2)** Local high schools or universities could provide a "time line" of what businesses operated in a particular building to show the direct connection to the past for the community and a specific building owner. (fits with SHPO Goal #1 to develop preservation related curricula for elementary and secondary schools)	**1)** Coulson & Leichenko (2004) **2)** Deckha (2004)

Finding	Interpretations	Conclusions	Implications	Recommendations	Literature
6. The demands of constant maintenance and the high cost of building materials with uncertainty of a return on investment had a negative impact on participant's financial investment.	**1)** Rarity of materials and skilled labor and distant locations of sources make them costly and difficult to find. **2)** May be more difficult to get a loan to finance repairs or maintenance due to lower value of collateral / more risky venture. **3)** Property owners need to generate higher levels of revenue to recover costs that may take long periods of time.	**1)** Complying with established preservation standards and the age of the building may be a financial burden on property owners.	**1)** The construction and manufacturing industries do not provide adequate resources (labor, materials) to accommodate the demands of this sector of the built environment. **2)** The financial industry complicates the process of rehabilitating historic properties due to difficulties in acquiring funds.	**1)** Vocational education could offer programs to teach skills for working on elements of historic buildings **2)** Local marketing campaign for manufacturing facilities that specialize in historically appropriate materials. **3)** The preservation community could make loans available for property owners who are rehabilitating properties that are not revenue-producing. (fits with SHPO Goal #5 to enact legislation to establish local financial incentives & identify public & private sector funding)	**1)**Heintzelman & Altieri (2013) **2)**Leichenko, Coulson, & Listokin (2001) **3)**Reynolds (2006)

Finding	Interpretations	Conclusions	Implications	Recommendations	Literature
7. Participants had difficulty working within the preservation system due to limitations on aesthetic choices and requirements for specific repair techniques and/or materials.	**1)** Property owners may have no knowledge of the term "historic district" or know where to find resources **2)** Realtors may not know or communicate that the property is in a historic district with restrictions which may result in decreased satisfaction of the owner due to constraints of the preservation oversight. **3)** Oversight of the district and enforcement of preservation requirements is not clear or consistent. **4)** Property owners may not be able to make required repairs / changes due to high costs and lack of skilled labor. **5)** Property owners may feel that owners rights take precedence over a separate preservation organization.	**1)** There is a great deal of confusion and lack of information on the part of property owners regarding the function of their jurisdictional preservation oversight body and compliance with established standards. **2)** Property owners may not necessarily value the historic district designation - may only be interested in the age - not historic significance as established by the NR	**1)** Preservation officials may help owners of historic property by clearly and consistently conveying requirements for compliance for each jurisdiction.	**1)** Preservation officials can develop and give out a comprehensive list of the resources available to property owners in districts or surrounding communities; these resources should include the financial, labor, and building material industries. **2)** Preservation officials could develop and give out a kit of basic information at every closing for those properties in a historic district. (fits with SHPO Goal #1 to develop effective working relationships with electronic and print media to transmit information and Goal #2 to disseminate info about preservation issues in hard copy & electronic formats) **3)** Communities could become a Certified Local Government.	**1)** Maskey, Brown & Lin (2009) **2)** Heintzelman & Altieri (2013)

VITA

Valerie L. Settles

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE AND IMPACT PROPERTY OWNERSHIP IN OKLAHOMA HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Major Field: Human Environmental Sciences – Design, Housing, and Merchandising

Biographical:

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Human Environmental Sciences – Design, Housing, and Merchandising at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2014.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Human Environmental Science—Living Space Design at University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma in 1995.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Industrial Engineering at University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma in 1992.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering at University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida in 1986.

Experience:

Instructor, Interior Design Program (July 2004 – present), University of Central Oklahoma, Department of Design, Edmond, Oklahoma

Interior Designer, (1995 – 2000), C. H. Guernsey & Company, Architectural and Engineering Firm, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

Professional Memberships:

Professional Member, American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), (1999 – 2000, 2005 – present)

Professional Member, Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC), (2005 – present)